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ABSTRACT

The National Literacy Strategy provides steady and consistent means of raising standards of literacy in England over a long period of time. The Strategy is made up of a Framework for Teaching, which gives detailed guidance to teachers, a supporting professional development program, and other community-based elements. This Review of Research indicates many of the sources of research and related evidence which underpin the National Literacy Strategy. In particular, the Review concentrates on the Framework for Teaching, but it also draws upon sources related to the Policy and Strategic Justifications, School Effectiveness, and Management and Issues of Teaching Quality. These sources include findings from survey, experimental, and observational research; analyses and discussions from literary scholarship; and reports from curriculum development projects and school inspections. Of particular value have been a number of meta-analyses of research in a particular field, and these serve as landmarks at several points in the Review. Although the length of the review was limited, and work in preparing it has inevitably had to be of a selective nature, where appropriate, every effort has been made to refer to sources which identify overviews of relevant evidence. Includes an extensive bibliography. Appended is information about recurring issues in inspection evidence. (NKA)

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The *National Literacy Strategy* provides a steady and consistent means of raising standards of literacy over a long period of time. The *Strategy* is made up of a *Framework for Teaching*, which gives detailed guidance to teachers, a supporting professional development programme and other community-based elements.

The policy and strategic justifications of the *Strategy* include a recognition of how literacy contributes to the lives and personal development of individuals and to the strength of the economy as a whole. Research suggests, however, that reading standards in England and Wales have remained largely unchanged for many years. International comparisons indicate a relatively greater tail of under-achievement than is found in many other countries.

The *NLS* has drawn its teaching approaches from successful initiatives in the USA and Australasia and derived its *Framework for Teaching* from that developed in the *National Literacy Project*, which was set up in 1996. The structure of a daily Literacy Hour is related to the yearly curriculum time calculated in the Dearing Review of the National Curriculum. The emphasis on direct, interactive teaching with termly objectives and dedicated literacy time has substantial support from research into school effectiveness and school improvement. This evidence also underlines the importance of school management in implementing the *NLS*, so that effective teaching can be maintained over time and despite changes in staff.

Evidence from school inspection indicates that several aspects of literacy teaching may need to be modified or strengthened in many schools in order to implement the *Strategy*. These include: an increase in direct teaching and in the time pupils spend on texts; greater use of balanced teaching approaches that also provide for extension; the use of systematic phonics; and more attention to the teaching of writing. Teachers' subject knowledge may at times need strengthening in order to implement the *NLS* with understanding and insight. Improvement in teaching quality will help reduce the large variations in SATs results between schools with similar intakes. The evaluation of the *National Literacy Project* provides significant evidence of how literacy standards can be improved and of some of the demands that the *NLS* will make on teaching skills, school management and professional development.

The general model of reading and writing in the *Framework* emphasises teaching and learning at word, sentence and text level. It is a model that provides for connections between these levels and between reading and writing. The model underpins several successful initiatives in literacy education. The objectives in each level are divided into a number of generic teaching areas. Some of these have been extensively studied and researched (e.g. literature and poetry; phonics and spelling; shared reading); some have been studied relatively recently in projects which are still being disseminated (e.g. reading and writing for information; guided reading); others have not been so thoroughly investigated but involve pragmatic applications from basic research findings (e.g. shared and guided writing). Grammar and punctuation are currently being studied in ways that reflect better-informed notions of what they represent.

Related Items

Watching and Learning Evaluation of the Implementation of the NLNS: First Annual Report and Summary

Much of the evidence in the *Review* is complementary, confirming the promise of the *National Literacy Strategy* to raise standards and to improve the life chances of many children.

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The *National Literacy Strategy* was established in 1997 by the incoming UK government to raise standards of literacy in English primary schools over a five to ten year period. The *Strategy* was the result of the work of a Literacy Task Force which had been set up by the Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, in May 1996. The Task Force published a preliminary consultation report in February 1997 (LTF, 1997a) and a final report in August 1997. In its final report (LTF, 1997b) the Task Force set out the details of a 'steady, consistent strategy' for raising standards of literacy which could be sustained over a long period of time and be made a central priority for the education service as a whole. The main strands of the *Strategy* include:

1. A national target that, by 2002, 80% of 11 year olds should reach the standard expected for their age in English (Level 4) in the National Curriculum tests for Key Stage 2 (7-11 year olds). The proportion reaching this standard in 1996 was 57%. Individual schools were requested to agree related interim targets with their Local Education Authorities (LEAs).

2. *A Framework for Teaching* (DfEE, 1998a) which (i) sets out termly teaching objectives for the 5-11 age range, (ii) provides a practical structure of time and class management for a daily Literacy Hour and (iii) gives additional guidance on mixed year classes and small schools; children of Reception Age; children with English as an Additional Language (EAL); and children with Special Educational Needs.

The objectives focus on three broad dimensions of literacy: word level work (phonics, spelling and vocabulary and also including handwriting); sentence level work (grammar and punctuation); and text level work (comprehension and composition).

The structure of the Literacy Hour is divided between approximately 30 minutes of whole class teaching, 20 minutes of group and independent work and 10 minutes for whole class review, reflection and consolidation.

The *Framework* is derived from materials developed in the *National Literacy Project*, which was set up by the previous government to raise standards in a selected number of LEAs. The *Framework* notes that further literacy work should be productively linked to other curriculum areas and that additional time may also be needed for:

- reading to the class (e.g. in end of day sessions)
- pupils' own independent reading (for interest and pleasure)
- extended writing (especially for older pupils).

The *Strategy* recommends that every primary school should adopt the *Framework* unless it can demonstrate through its action plan, schemes of

work and test performance that its own approach is at least as effective.

3. A programme of professional development for all primary teachers, centred on a *Literacy Training Pack* (DfEE, 1998b). This *Pack* is made up of course booklets, overhead transparencies and audio and videotapes to support three in-service training days in 1998-9. Headteachers, school literacy co-ordinators and a school governor were also allocated two additional LEA-based training days in the summer term of 1998 to help prepare for the professional development programme.

4. Other community-based parts of the *Strategy* include a media campaign and a series of events in a National Year of Reading *(1998-9)*,Summer Literacy Schools and a range of recommendations for other agencies and institutions.

This *Review* indicates many of the sources of research and related evidence which underpin the *National Literacy Strategy*. In particular the *Review* concentrates on the *Framework for Teaching*, but it also draws upon sources related to the Policy and Strategic Justifications, School Effectiveness and Management and Issues of Teaching Quality. These sources include findings from survey, experimental and observational research; analyses and discussions from literary scholarship; and reports from curriculum development projects and school inspections. Of particular value have been a number of meta-analyses of research in a particular field and these serve as landmarks at several points in the *Review*.

Overall, there is substantial evidence to support the case for raising literacy standards in the United Kingdom and considerable support for modifying the ways reading and writing are taught in many primary schools. The relationship between research and practice, in this as in other areas of education, is not a perfect one. It is a relationship which is mediated by many other factors. Nevertheless, the success of the *NLS* will be influenced by a widespread professional recognition of the need for the modification referred to above and a willingness to accommodate the challenges to knowledge and practice which it will bring.

As it was decided to limit the length of the *Review* to about 20,000 words, work in preparing it has inevitably had to be of a selective nature but, where appropriate, every effort has been made to refer to sources which identify overviews of relevant evidence.

The selection has been made after extensive consultation of many sources, both printed and electronic, and after discussions or correspondence with many individuals, particularly those listed on the Acknowledgements page. I must add, of course, that the responsibility for the final content is very much my own.

The *Review* ranges widely and brings together many references from several traditions of thought. The inclusive nature of the *Review* is a testimony to how the *National Literacy Strategy* is underpinned by research and related evidence from a variety of disciplines. The complementary nature of much of the evidence is a clear indicator that, if it is widely and sensitively implemented, the *National Literacy Strategy* offers a major promise of significantly raising standards and of improving the lifechances of thousands of children.

Roger Beard
School of Education
University of Leeds
December 1998

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Literacy and education

It is generally assumed in educational systems across the world that one of the central purposes of schooling is to help pupils learn how to read and write.

This assumption is based on a number of underlying beliefs about the opportunities which learning to be literate brings in its wake. In the United Kingdom, the final quarter of the twentieth century has seen a number of central government reports, research initiatives and recurrent professional debates about how these opportunities may be extended to more and more of its population by raising standards of literacy attainment.

These beliefs draw upon a range of perspectives which reflect different, but generally complementary, values regarding the benefits which literacy brings. UK government publications have stressed the contribution which literacy can make to personal growth through the reading of, and response to, literature and from the efficient use of information. Literacy is widely seen as promoting valuable ways of thinking about and understanding the world and ourselves.

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Written language helps to give communication a permanent form and a kind of 'completeness' which gives it certain advantages for communicating across space and time. The relationships between language, literacy and thought have exercised many distinguished psychologists. Whether literacy promotes certain kinds of cognitive growth is a matter of some debate (e.g. Olson, 1977; Scribner and Cole, 1981; Olson, 1994). Many psychologists have, however, argued that literacy promotes a specific kind of 'systematic' thought. Lev Vygotsky (1962, p. 180-1) referred to writing as 'written speech' and as having a separate linguistic function, differing from oral speech in both structure and mode of functioning. Margaret Donaldson has developed this view by arguing that language written down is 'cut loose' or disembedded from the context of ongoing activities and feelings in which speech functions and on which speech thrives. This makes literacy particularly apt for the development and expression of certain kinds of thought. How do birds find their way when they migrate? Why does concrete set hard? Reading enables us to learn from people we cannot personally know. Writing helps us to sustain and order thought (Donaldson, 1993, p. 50; Garton and Pratt, 1989). Furthermore, learning to be literate enables us to make judgements on, and to be critical of, what others have written (Meek, 1991).

Central government publications in the UK have consistently endorsed this view, particularly in relation to the educational gains from using literacy to engage with literature and information.

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Literacy and literature

The central role of literature in the English curriculum is a reflection of the kinds of beliefs expressed in the Bullock Report nearly a quarter of a century ago. Much has been claimed for literature: that it helps to shape the personality, refine the sensibility, sharpen the critical intelligence; that it is a powerful instrument for empathy and a medium through which children can acquire their values (DES, 1975, p. 124). One of the most helpful collections of papers on the relationships between children's literature and education can be found in Fox (1995).

The Kingman Report (DES, 1988) adopted a similarly inspired perspective. It argued that wide reading, and as great an experience as possible of the best imaginative literature, are essential to the full development of an ear for language, and to a full knowledge of the range of possible patterns of thought and feeling made accessible by the power and range of language. Responsive reading provides a storehouse for use in subsequent writing.

Kingman also drew attention to the influence of literacy on spoken language. It noted how, when pupils write stories and poems, they have the opportunity to experiment with language, trying out written structures which they would otherwise never use. Once accomplished through writing, these structures are available for use in speech, increasing its flexibility and power (DES, 1988, pp. 10-11). A discussion of specific written structures which can form part of this process can be found in Perera (1984).

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Literacy and information

The words of the Bullock Report also had a prescient ring in relation to the reading and writing of information. The Report argued that dealing efficiently with information should be recognised as one of the major problems in modern society (DES, 1975, p. 95).

The subsequent growth in information and communications technology adds further support to the Report's suggestions for educational practice. Individuals need not only to cope with information efficiently but to organise their own use of it. This involves several interrelated processes: identifying information needs; knowing where relevant sources are and how to access them; using appropriate criteria to judge their value; and selecting the limited number of sources which suit individuals best. In this way, individuals are more consciously able to cope with the demands of the 'information age'.

Literacy education has more recently been influenced by studies of the different genres in which non-fiction texts are written. Drawing upon earlier work by Gunther Kress (1982) and Michael Halliday (1985), a number of Australian writers have developed theories which have linked different kinds of texts to the social purposes they fulfil (e.g. Martin, 1989). Learning to read and write in particular genres is linked to certain realms of social interaction, influence and power (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993, p. 7).

Moreover, low literacy attainment may not only disadvantage individuals. It can influence the national economy as a whole.

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Literacy and the economy

Low levels of literacy in a significant proportion of the population can have far-reaching economic consequences. Reading and writing are justifiably referred to as central parts of 'the basics', as these basics are the tools of further learning (Barber, 1997, p. 174). Weaknesses in processing written information can make a workforce less efficient and the companies which employ them less competitive in world markets. Very low levels of literacy are associated with unemployment and crime. In a report on the impact of literacy, education and training on the UK Economy, the accountants Ernst and Young estimate that 60% of all jobs now require reasonable reading skills e.g. being able to understand and act on written instructions, obtain simple information and understand a price list. The report cites extensive evidence linking labour productivity with a thorough grasp of literacy, numeracy and oral communication and goes on to warn that UK productivity is relatively low compared with its major competitors. The report estimates the costs to the country of illiteracy, in lost business, remedial education, crime and benefit payments to be over £10 billion per annum (Ernst & Young, 1993).

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According to the reviews of evidence undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), standards in literacy among British primary school children have largely remained stable over the period between 1948 and 1996 (Brooks, 1998; see also Davies and Brember, 1997; 1998). Slight changes have often been followed by changes in the opposite direction a few years later. For instance, in the surveys undertaken in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) between 1979 and 1983 and between 1983 and 1988, the reading attainment of 11 year olds rose slightly; their writing attainment rose slightly between 1979 and 1983 and fell slightly between 1983 and 1988. In surveys undertaken by the NFER, between 1987 and 1991, the average reading attainment of 8 year olds fell by 2.5 standardised points; between 1991 and 1995 the average reading attainment of 8 year olds rose again by almost exactly the same amount.

The central purpose of the *National Literacy Strategy* is to raise these standards substantially. The need to target standards in this way has been given priority in the light of research findings from comparisons of reading attainment in different countries (Elley, 1992; Brooks, Pugh and Schagen, 1996). The most recent research of this kind involved assessing the reading attainment of a nationally representative sample of 1,817 9 year olds (Y4) in England and Wales. The test was the same as that used in a survey of 27 other countries in 1991 (Elley, 1992) and includes narrative, expository (factual) and 'document' material (charts, tables, graphs, lists, etc.). This research has indicated that Britain is generally out-performed by countries like Finland, France and New Zealand. Britain is located within a 'middle' group of countries which includes Belgium and Spain. In the middle and upper parts of the range of scores, children in England and Wales performed as well as those in countries much higher in the rank order (Brooks, Pugh and Schagen, 1996, p. 13). However, a distinctive feature of British performance is the existence of a long 'tail' of underachievement which is relatively greater than that of other countries (Brooks, Pugh and Schagen, 1996, p. 10).

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The measurement of standards

The comparison of literacy standards between countries raises various issues about cultural and linguistic biases (see Elley, 1994 and Purves, 1992 for a discussion of these issues).

The study of literacy standards within countries, but between different points in time, raises additional issues. The standardised norm-referenced tests which are often used for assessing reading may appear rather contrived and may only sample a limited range of reading behaviours (Pumfrey, 1985; Vincent, 1994). Even when they are designed to reflect greater validity in relation to the reading of everyday life, norm-referenced tests have a major disadvantage if they are used to monitor substantial rises in standards. These tests are constructed around a normal distribution curve and designed to allocate 50% of the population above and below the median score (Pumfrey, 1977). If standards rise, then re-standardisation is necessary.

The National Curriculum assessments (SATs) are criterion-referenced and can accommodate shifts in the distributions of performance without re-standardisation being necessary (TGAT, 1988). At the same time, the specific level descriptions have annually to be translated into different test formats to avoid the difficulties created by excessive 'teaching to the test'. This re-writing raises further questions about year on year comparisons. As Level 4 in English is being used as a national target for 80% of 11 year olds by 2002, there is a concomitant need for the body which oversees the national testing, the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA), to be rigorous in ensuring the consistency of Level 4 requirements (LTF, 1997a, p.7). The use of Level 4 in this way is separate from other policy decisions on whether or not to publish league tables of the individual schools or related 'value-added' information. The 80% target is a strategic element in a new national target-setting culture.

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The target-setting culture

The increasing role of target-setting in education is discussed and illustrated in *From Targets to Action* (DfEE, 1997). Target-setting helps a school focus on school performance and assists in linking school review to development planning. In particular, target-setting helps to ensure that development planning (i) is based on evidence; (ii) clarifies the link between effective teaching and pupil performance; (iii) ensures consistency across the school and (iv) helps to concentrate management arrangements into raising standards of attainment.

There is only a limited literature on target-setting in education, as it is derived from its long-standing use in industrial management and its increasing use in improving public services. Ralph Tabberer has written several helpful publications including one which argues that whole-school improvement initiatives need to be specific to the needs and culture of the individual school. Targets for school improvement and the strategies adopted to address them should be grounded in self-knowledge (Tabberer, 1996).

For many years secondary schools have been able to use public examination results as part of their review and development processes (*Fitz-Gibbon*,1996). In recent years the availability of attainment data on all pupils, following the introduction of Standard Assessment Tests, has provided the opportunity for primary schools to incorporate pupil performance into their own target-setting culture (Conner, 1991). In this way primary schools have taken on new, high profile identities within a broader context of educational change.

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Educational change

There are several aspects of the *National Literacy Strategy* which are supported by studies of how large-scale educational change is brought about. Michael Fullan and Suzanne Stiegelbauer (1991), for example, suggest several guidelines for central governments, based on the authors' wide-ranging review of published research. The first guideline is to note the critical difference between, on the one hand, the ability or willingness of implementers to comply with rules and, on the other hand, their capacity to successfully deliver a service. If governments become preoccupied with the regulation of the educational service, then a disproportionate amount of time and energy may be spent on the surveillance of what is a 'loosely coupled' system. Moreover, such a preoccupation diverts attention away from developing local capacity to make improvements.

Fullan and Stiegelbauer draw upon the work of Richard Elmore (1980) in suggesting that policy makers should be more concerned with the state of local capacity for programme delivery and with providing support and guidance. The *NLS* gives priority to this latter emphasis by including three full days of training on the teaching of literacy for all 190,000 primary teachers in England during 1998-9. The structure and content of these professional development days is guided by the booklets, videotapes and audio cassettes of the *NLS Training Pack*. Guidance on the management of literacy at school level and an introduction to the *Training Pack* is provided by two preceding training days for the headteacher, literacy co-ordinator and literacy governor of all primary schools. In this way, the *NLS* represents an emphasis on professional capacity: the skills, resources and leadership in all schools.

Fullan and Stiegelbauer set out several more guidelines which the *NLS* has broadly fulfilled:

- clarifying the nature and expectations of the Strategy with local agencies: the LEA staff involved in training headteachers, governors and co-ordinators were themselves first trained over a five day period earlier in 1998;
- ensuring that there is an explicit but flexible implementation plan: in the *NLS* this is provided by *The Implementation of the National Literacy Strategy* (LTF, 1997b);
- the taking of special steps for central government agency leaders to develop their knowledge of the policy and its implementation: the implementation of the *NLS* is overseen by a team of regional and training directors who meet regularly to review progress and evolving needs;
- giving priority to 'second-order' changes, that is in the actual practices of teaching and learning: the principal concern of the *NLS* is with the teaching of a new objectives-led *Framework* through a daily Literacy Hour and with the raising of standards to meet national targets.

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Fullan and Stiegelbauer's final guideline is a reminder that, in bringing about educational change, an acknowledgement of the complexity of an enterprise goes hand in hand with a commitment to persistent application. The *NLS* is committed to a 'steady, consistent' approach over a 'five to ten year period' (LTF, 1997b, p. 4) which has 16 different elements. As well as targets and teaching methods, it includes parental responsibilities, family literacy and a national year of reading. The implementation is accompanied by a recognition of the process and likely features of the second part of the *National Literacy Strategy* between 2002 and 2006 (LTF, 1997b, pp. 41-2).

The inclusion in the *NLS* of specified teaching methods is of particular significance in relation to the needs of disadvantaged students and pupils. In programmes which are designed to raise standards of literacy, careful attention has to be taken of which aspects of the programme are specifically designed to help such pupils, as they have relatively greater ground to make up. There are several programmes in different parts of the world which are specifically targeted at disadvantaged students and which share some of the key features of the *NLS*. While none of these programmes have yet run their full course, their overlaps with the *NLS* indicate the general direction of global thinking.

The work of Bob Slavin and his colleagues in the USA is a case in point (Slavin, 1996). Their work at the Centre for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk in Baltimore has consistently supported several features of educational provision now adopted by the *NLS*: Slavin's *Success for All* programme is currently in use in nearly 500 schools in over 30 states in the USA. It is also used in an adapted form in Australia, Canada, Israel and Mexico.

The main features of *Success for All* (more recently called 'Roots and Wings') are:

- a fast-paced, structured curriculum;
- direct, interactive teaching;
- systematic phonics in the context of interesting text;
- a combination of shared and paired reading and writing;
- early interventions for pupils who have not made expected progress after one year at school.

These are very similar to the approaches adopted by the *NLS*, with the exception of the last one. The evaluation of the *National Literacy Strategy* may indicate whether it needs to be extended to provide additional systematic intervention for children at risk after one year of schooling.

The positive and inclusive nature of *Success for All* is particularly well captured in a paper entitled 'Whenever We Choose' (Slavin *et al.*, 1994), referring to the fact that all children can be successfully taught if the most effective methods are used.

While these and other aspects overlap with the teaching approaches reflected in the *NLS*, Slavin (1997) has also drawn attention to the more generic significance for British education of *Success for All*. This externally developed reform programme may appear at odds with the belief that individual teachers should make up their own teaching strategies. Slavin concedes that *Success for All* is one of several comprehensive school-wide models for elementary/primary education reform that have been carefully developed and broadly disseminated. He suggests that, rather than having every school reinvent the wheel, schools can now focus their energies on learning about and then intelligently implementing well-designed models.

This suggestion is very much at the heart of the *NLS*. As is pointed out in the final report of the Literacy Task Force (LTF, 1997b), the chief

strategic task is to ensure that primary teachers and schools are wellinformed about best practice and have the knowledge and skills to act upon it. Research by Sam Stringfield at Johns Hopkins University suggests that schools which build on an externally developed programme (using an 'off the shelf' approach) experience greater success than schools which implement locally developed school-wide projects (Stringfield, 1995).

A similar strategy especially to address the needs of disadvantaged pupils is being implemented in Melbourne, Australia, in the Early Literacy Research Project (ELRP) led by Carmel Crévola and Peter Hill. The project is in part a response to the evidence cited in the Commission on Reading of the USA National Academy of Education: that a country receives highest returns on investment in education from the early years of schooling when children are first learning to read and write (see Adams, 1990). Crévola and Hill draw on evidence that schools only have a narrow 'window of opportunity' to make a difference in helping pupils with difficulties in literacy learning. Very little evidence exists for the success of programmes designed to correct reading problems beyond the second year of schooling. However, they draw upon a range of evidence, including Slavin's (e.g. Wasik and Slavin, 1993), that dramatic improvements are achievable within the context of a fully implemented, comprehensive strategy that involves both system- and school-wide commitment and co-ordination.

This project is underpinned by a different form of target setting, which takes the form of 'three waves of teaching' derived from Marie Clay and Bryan Tuck (1991).

- First Wave: With good teaching in the first year of schooling, one can expect 80% of pupils to have reading and writing under way.
- Second Wave: During the second year of schooling with one-to-one teaching using the Reading Recovery programme (Clay, 1993) one can expect to have another 18% under way.
- Third Wave: This leaves two per cent for whom further referral and special support will be necessary during the third year of school (Crévola and Hill, 1998).

Crévola and Hill emphasise that the starting point of all comprehensive early literacy prevention and intervention strategies is attitudinal: high expectations; a belief in the capacity of all students to make progress, given sufficient time and support; and a relentless determination to persist with those who are not experiencing success.

The elements of the programme designed by Crévola and Hill have many similarities with Slavin's *Success for All* and the *NLS* including:

- high expectations and explicit targets;
- detailed, systematic and on-going profiles of pupil progress;
- systematic direct teaching;
- dedicated times for specific literacy instruction;
- early intervention and one-to-one teaching for pupils who fail to make progress;
- careful co-ordination of each school's literacy teaching;
- a supporting programme of professional development.

Again, the provision for an additional 'wave' of early intervention may indicate how the *NLS* may eventually need to be extended.

Professional Development is at the heart of another current programme, which is focused on four large urban school districts in North America and with its first three phases being evaluated by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (Fullan *et al.*, 1997). *Building Infrastructures for Professional Development* (BI) is funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and places professional development for educators at the centre of educational reform and instructional improvement. The Learner Communities Network, Inc. (LCN) has been established in Cleveland to connect and support the districts, individually and as a group. The initiative has three distinctive features:

- focusing on entire districts in order to 'scale up' school reform;
- using the Learning Communities Network to link schools and districts in a web of support;
- creating infrastructures for professional development that can be sustained regardless of changes in district leadership.

The BI programme is far more diffuse than the *NLS* and in many ways more open-ended. However, it is significant that, in its report on *An Assessment of Early Progress*, the evaluation suggests that the Rockefeller Foundation identify goals for the fourth Phase of the initiative and establish indicators for assessing progress (Fullan *et al.*, 1997, p. 78).

The *NLS* reflects similar strategic thinking in 'scaling up' educational change, from the initial impetus of the *National Literacy Project*; in linking its directorate to LEAs, schools and teachers through its training programme; and in creating an infrastructure for teaching and professional development through the *Framework* and the *Training Pack*. The training programme which supports the *Framework* and the *Training Pack* allows for the exploration of the rationale, modelling, practice and collaboration suggested by the extensive research into staff development undertaken by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1995). The *NLS* may be seen to have already benefited from establishing clear goals from the outset in the form of national long-term targets and from providing for local target-setting.

It is also important to retain a sense of realism about the difficulties in bringing about substantial educational change. In a paper which is concerned with the ways in which strategic planning issues bear on the success of school improvement efforts, David Crandall and his colleagues explore the range of complex interactions which are involved. Educational change is more likely to be brought about if the integral implications for classroom practice are accessible, observable and inspirational. The implications also need to have a degree of compatibility with existing practice, adaptability and be based on 'craft legitimisation' i.e. to be based on consultation with teachers and field-testing (Crandall *et al.*, 1986). The *NLS* can be seen as accommodating many of these issues, in providing a *Framework* for teaching, guidance, illustrative training materials and the extensive development phase of the *National Literacy Project*.

Similarly, the Rand study by Milbrey McLaughlin (1990) in the 1970s confirms that there is no one-to-one relationship between policy and practice. Policy cannot mandate what matters. Implementation dominates outcomes. Local variability is the rule. Uniformity is the exception. The challenge for educational policy lies in understanding how policy can enable and facilitate effective practice.

The policy and strategic justifications for the *NLS* can thus be seen to be underpinned by several international sources, including scholarly generalisations from published research and current initiatives in the USA and Australia, especially those designed to boost the performance of disadvantaged students. The *NLS* does in fact go further than these sources in that it embraces the national primary school system as a whole. However, in the light the cautions of Crandall and McLaughlin, it is clear that the *NLS* has provided much of what it feasibly can provide, in setting a direction and providing a *Framework* (Reynolds, 1998; Teddlie and Reynolds, 1999). It cannot determine outcomes. Ultimately

the success of the *NLS* will depend on the knowledge and skills of teachers, the*co-operation*of parents and pupils and the awareness that schools can make a substantial impact on raising standards. Such an awareness can be heightened when another realm of evidence is considered - that concerned with school improvement and management.

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In recent years research has made substantial progress in analysing what makes schools effective and in drawing out implications for school improvement and management. Substantial school effectiveness research developed rather later in the UK compared with other countries, but British work in this field now includes one of the most influential studies of primary schools (Mortimore *et al.*, 1988a) and several international research reviews (e.g. Reynolds and Cuttance, 1992; Sammons, Hillmore and Mortimore, 1995; Reynolds *et al.*, 1994; Teddlie and Reynolds, 1999).

The findings from school effectiveness research have consistently challenged earlier assumptions that pupils' social background largely determines their school performance (e.g. Coleman *et al.*, 1966; CACE, 1967; Jencks *et al.*, 1972). Recent research accepts that the influence of social factors on pupils before schooling is considerable but this research also provides evidence that, once pupils begin school, then the school itself can have a significantly greater influence on pupil progress (Sammons, Hillmore and Mortimore, 1995, p. 6). In relation to reading progress, this 'value added' by the school can be four times more important than background factors such as age, gender and social class. In relation to mathematics, the value added by the school can be ten times greater (Mortimore, 1988a and b). A large meta-analysis of research undertaken by Bert Creemers in Groningen suggests that, taken overall, 'about 12% to 18% of the variance in pupil outcomes can be explained by school and classroom factors when account is taken of pupils' background' (Creemers, 1994,*p. 14*).Such percentages may not appear particularly large, but they can eventually make the difference between seven Grade E results and seven Grade C results at GCSE (Thomas and Mortimore, 1996). Some studies suggest that this variance may be greater in primary schools than in secondary schools (Sammons, Hillmore and Mortimore, 1995). For reading, the differential effectiveness (value added) of individual schools has been found to be greatest for pupils with low initial attainment (Sammons *et al.*, 1993). Furthermore, the long-term influence of positive primary school factors on subsequent GCSE attainment has been indicated in a follow up to the 1988 study by Mortimore et al. (Sammons, Nuttall, Cuttance and Thomas, 1995).

Several other related issues continue to be addressed in the research literature:

- whether schools perform consistently across outcomes and areas (e.g. Sammons *et al.*, 1996);
- whether schools have the same effects on all pupils (Reynolds, 1992);
- whether school effectiveness research findings can be directly applied to school improvement work (Stoll, 1996).

Before discussing how the *NLS* builds on school effectiveness research, several key aspects of this research need to be borne in mind:

- school effectiveness is generally gauged by the further progress which pupils make than might be expected from consideration of the school's intake (Mortimore, 1991);
- the measures used are normally derived from attainment in basic subjects, especially reading, numeracy and examination results;
- the most valid research is longitudinal, so that one or more cohorts can be followed over time, and a school's consistency and stability can be investigated;
- the outcomes from this research are inappropriate for the production of 'blue-print' schools and practices. The analyses used are often correlational, using multi-level statistical techniques; they do not pertain to identify causal relationships. However, the studies provide valuable background and insights for those concerned with school improvement, as there is a core of consistency to be found across a variety of studies in several different countries.

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Consistent findings on school effectiveness

One of the biggest challenges for school effectiveness researchers is to identify factors which 'travel well' and which can be strategically used to support school improvement (Gray, Reynolds *et al.*, 1996).

In a meta-analysis of research from across the world, Jaap Scheerens (1992) provides a clear summary of these factors. Two characteristics of school effectiveness have 'multiple empirical research confirmation':

1. structured teaching i.e.

   - making clear what has to be learnt

   - dividing material into manageable units

   - teaching in a well-considered sequence

   - the use of material in which pupils make use of hunches and prompts

   - regular testing for progress

   - immediate feedback

2. effective learning time

   This factor is partly related to the first, in that whole class teaching can often be superior to individualised teaching because in the latter the teacher has to divide attention in such a way that the net result per pupil is lower. Other aspects of effective teaching time are 'curricular emphasis', related to the time spent on certain subjects, and the need to inspire, challenge and praise so as to stimulate the motivation to learn and thus indirectly to increase net learning time.

Scheerens' meta-analysis identifies four more factors which have 'a reasonable empirical basis':

3. opportunity to learn; teaching what is to be assessed;

4. pressure to achieve; particularly through...

5. maintaining high expectations;

6. parental involvement; backing up the conditions that provide learning at school.

The *NLS* takes up the implications of Scheerens' analysis in several ways. Firstly, it stresses the importance of direct teaching by the use of

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the whole class teaching in the first half of the Literacy Hour and the maintenance of direct teaching with groups, and then with the class again, in the second half. Secondly, it maximises effective learning time by ensuring that there is a dedicated Literacy Hour during each school day, with further suggestions on providing for additional literacy learning time during the rest of the day (DfEE, 1998a, p. 14). Thirdly, it draws directly on the National Curriculum in the content of the *Framework* and assists the related 'opportunities to learn' by adopting a clear objectives-based approach for each primary school term. High expectations run through the *NLS* and emanate from the national literacy targets for 2002. Parental involvement is encouraged indirectly through several other elements of the *NLS* and through the attention of the mass media which the *NLS* seeks to attract and to exploit.

As was mentioned earlier, there is a similar meta-analysis of research into the effective classroom by Creemers (1994). In this case there are several more factors which have 'strong empirical evidence' as characteristics of effective teaching:

Curriculum
- Explicitness and ordering of goals and content
- Advanced organisers, relating what pupils already know to what they have to learn next
- Evaluation of pupil achievements
- Feedback

Grouping Procedures
- For Mastery Learning, (for mastering the learning of one unit of learning before moving on to the next)
- Evaluation

Teacher Behaviour
- Management/orderly and quiet atmosphere
- Homework
- Structuring the content by advance organisers
- Questioning
- Evaluation

Another range of factors are judged to have 'moderate empirical evidence':

Curriculum
- Structure and clarity of content

Grouping Procedures
- Ability grouping
- Feedback
- Corrective Instruction, dealing promptly with systematic errors before introducing new tasks or material to pupils

Teacher Behaviour
- High expectations
- Clear goal setting, with restricted goals and emphasis on basis skills
- Structuring the content
- Clarity of presentation
- Immediate exercises (after the presentation of new contents)
- Feedback

The significance of these factors is underlined by Creemers' conclusion that the greatest variations in effectiveness are within schools, by department and individual, rather than between schools. Put simply, the classroom learning level has perhaps two or three times the influence on pupil achievement than the school level does (Creemers, 1994; Reynolds, 1998; Teddlie and Reynolds, 1999).

Again, the *NLS* objectives-based *Framework* and Literacy Hour incorporate nearly all of the elements identified by Creemers. Although

these elements of the *NLS* do not include homework, there are several community-based elements in the *Strategy* which may be exploited by schools when considering the role for homework within their own arrangements for home-school liaison and collaboration.

The analyses of Scheerens and Creemers include research on both secondary and primary schools, but one of the most prestigious of the studies to which they refer is the *School Matters* research, a longitudinal study of over 50 primary schools (Mortimore *et al.*, 1988a). This research includes data on management issues as well as those relating directly to teaching and learning. Peter Mortimore's twenty years of research into school effectiveness has been brought together in *The Road to Improvement* (Mortimore, 1998).

The *School Matters* study identifies 12 factors related to effective schools. The findings are also usefully discussed in relation to what earlier research had found.

School policy factors

1. Purposeful leadership of the staff by the headteacher: understanding the school's needs and being actively involved in its work

2. The involvement of the deputy head, especially in policy decisions, assuming delegated and shared responsibility

3. The involvement of teachers, especially allocations of teaching age-range, curriculum guidelines and spending policies.

4. Consistency amongst teachers, especially in following curriculum guidelines.

Classroom policy factors

5. Structured sessions, involving a teacher-organised framework but allowing pupils to exercise a degree of independence. The research suggests the inclusion in lessons of 'audits' of which tasks have been achieved and of what has been learned.

6. Intellectually challenging teaching, in which teachers used higher order questions and statements and encouraged pupils to use creative imagination and problem-solving in an attractive working environment.

7. A work-centred environment, with a high level of pupil industry and low noise levels and in which teachers spent more time discussing the content of work with pupils and less time on routine matters and work maintenance.

8. Limited focus within sessions, in which lessons are organised around one curriculum area (or, at the very most, two) with some differentiation as needed.

9. Maximum communication between teachers and pupils, including some whole-class teaching which, in the research study, increased the overall number of contacts with pupils and led to more frequent higher order communications.

10. Record-keeping, which assisted planning and assessment and which also included information on pupils' personal and social development and examples of pupils' work.

Aspects of relevance to school and class policy

11. Parental involvement, in supporting pupils' educational development at home and in assisting in school and attending parents' meetings.

12. Positive climate, with a greater emphasis on praise and reward and fair, firm classroom management combined with enthusiasm and interest in pupils as individuals.

Not all these findings relate directly to the *NLS*, but several clear connections can be made, as David Reynolds (1998) points out. Examples include the emphasis on direct, interactive teaching, with whole classes and groups, in the Literacy Hour; the degree of independent work; the limited focus; and the emphasis on higher order questioning and discussion. The *School Matters* study also indicates the value of the plenary session in reviewing and auditing progress and achievements. The study supports the integral involvement of headteachers in the *Training Pack* briefing days and that of whole school staffs in the three training days which support the introduction of the *Framework*. The emphasis in the Literacy Hour of maximising teacher-pupil contact through class, group and plenary teaching is also supported, within a work-centred environment. Furthermore, the *NLS* will bring a consistency to teaching practices in schools which *School Matters* found to be another factor in school effectiveness.

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School improvement issues

These connections between school effectiveness evidence and possibilities for school improvement represent a growing trend between the two fields (Gray, Reynolds *et al.*, 1996; Reynolds and Teddlie, 1999). School improvement has traditionally been seen as a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in schools with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively (van Velzen, 1985, cited in Reynolds and Teddlie, 1999).

School improvement initiatives work on a number of assumptions including that:

- externally-related reforms need to be sensitive to the circumstances in individual schools;
- improvement is a carefully planned and managed process that takes place over several years;
- a key focus for change are schools' activities, procedures and use of resources;
- the school acts at the centre of an education system that has to work collaboratively;
- implementation of change has to link aims, strategies and plans to diagnosis and priority goal-setting;
- change is only successful when it has become 'institutionalised', part of the natural behaviour of teachers in school.

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Implications for school management

The emphasis on *sustained* effort and eventual institutionalisation of change is especially important to note. As Gray, Jesson and Reynolds *et al.* (1996) note, most accounts of sustained school improvement are underpinned by notions of the school's 'capacity to improve'. The real challenge for school improvement initiatives is, as Michael Fullan (1992,*p. 121)*suggests, to exploit schools' capacity to improve and to invest in strong

persistent efforts, because of the way practice is embedded in structures and routines which are internalised in individuals. School improvement needs to be recognised as a 'long haul' (Gray, Jesson and Reynolds *et al.*, 1996).

This recognition has led to a more recent and succinct definition of school improvement, an approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994, p. 3).

As Reynolds and Teddlie (1999) point out, this more rigorous definition implies that school improvement can be regarded:

i. as a vehicle for planned educational change (while realising that educational change is necessary for school improvement);

ii. as particularly appropriate during times of centralised initiatives;

iii. as usually necessitating some form of external support.

All this underlines the school management implications of the *National Literacy Strategy*. John Stannard, the Director of the *NLS*, acknowledged these implications in a paper presented at the Literacy Task Force Conference in London. He reported how the successful implementation of the *National Literacy Project*, which preceded the *NLS*, was built upon a recognition of a number of management issues which had been identified in research and inspection evidence. School improvement was fostered and sustained by:

- careful evaluation of the school's needs and achievements;
- high expectations through target-setting;
- schemes of work;
- effective use of time;
- monitoring of teachers' work;
- practical support for teaching in school;

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- effective use of additional adults (Stannard, 1997).

The paper goes on to stress that reading standards are clearly dependent on the quality of teaching and that teaching quality, equally, depends on the effective management of literacy. The acid test for any school has to be how well it can maintain an effective literacy curriculum as its teachers come and go.

The *National Literacy Strategy* is scheduled to continue to 2002 and probably beyond. Its demands on the management capacity of schools will be considerable. As David Reynolds (1998, p. 160) points out, 'validity' in effective teaching methods has now been largely established. What is now required is greater 'reliability' in the implementation of these methods. There is much to be gained from the management of each school considering the school's achievements and needs in relation to what is known about school effectiveness. Each school's needs and achievements may be brought into an even sharper focus when they are also related to recent evidence on teaching quality.

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Evidence from school inspections

Important issues for the teaching of literacy are raised in the annual reports on the teaching of English which are produced from school inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). These issues are related to recurrent findings on how different aspects of the National Curriculum for English are taught. Similar issues are raised in the publications which have replaced these reports in recent years, such as *Subjects and Standards* (Ofsted, 1996b) and *Standards in English* (Ofsted, 1997b). The annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) provide further information on general inspection findings. The findings from specific investigations undertaken by HMI, such as *The Teaching of Reading and Writing in Reception Classes and Year 1* (Ofsted, 1993c), *The Teaching and Learning of Reading in Primary Schools* (HMI, 1991b; 1992b) and by Ofsted, such as *The Teaching of Reading in 45 Inner London Schools* (Ofsted, 1996c) provide further evidence and are discussed later. Taking 1989 as a starting point (the first year of the National Curriculum), there has been a recurrent pattern of findings which provides strong support for many elements of the *NLS*.

It is important to note that the annual reports and commentaries include a variety of positive comments about pupils' attainment and teaching quality. In 1997, for instance, the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools states that the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons. It is only in a small proportion of schools where standards of pupil achievement are poor (Ofsted, 1997a, p. 5). In 1998 the Annual Report notes that those who comment on education fail to appreciate the extent to which some teachers have, on a day-to-day basis, to deal with the tragic consequences of family breakdown. At the same time, the Report notes that some schools in the most difficult of circumstances are achieving excellent results (Ofsted, 1998a, p. 12). However, the reports and commentaries do also contain recurrent comments which indicate the need for (i) many schools to strengthen the ways in which some aspects of literacy are taught and for (ii) substantial in-service support to be given to develop teachers' professional knowledge related to these aspects. In particular, there are recurrent comments on the need for the following to be strengthened in many schools:

i. the use of direct teaching, related to clear objectives and including skilful questioning;

ii. the provision of effective learning time;

iii. the appropriate balance of teaching methods and range of tasks provided;

iv. the use of systematic phonics;

v. the teaching of writing, including provision for a range of writing tasks and the diagnosis of pupils' weaknesses and related learning needs;

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vi. the extension of reading skills beyond the initial stages;

vii. teachers' subject knowledge in literacy teaching.

The pattern of comments on these aspects is shown in the Appendix to this *Review*.

Further support for strengthening these aspects of literacy teaching can be found in other HMI/Ofsted reports which focus specifically on literacy: *The Teaching and Learning of Reading in Primary Schools* (HMI, 1991b; 1992b); *The Teaching and Learning of Reading and Writing in Reception Classes and Year 1* (Ofsted, 1993c) and *The Teaching of Reading in 45 Inner London Primary Schools* (Ofsted, 1996c). There is additional support in the research and inspection evidence summarised in *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools* (Alexander *et al.*, 1992) and the two follow-up reports (Ofsted, 1993d; 1994).

In relation to 'teaching approach', the 1991 report associates teaching quality with regular well planned teaching, using a range of texts which are well-matched to children's abilities and which closely link reading and writing. Other associated aspects include productive use of available time and opportunities to see and hear text simultaneously (HMI, 1992b, p. 5). The Reception/Y1 report of 1993 emphasises the importance of the management of children's work, citing the ineffectiveness of excessive individualisation of reading activities (Ofsted, 1993c, p. 4). The London Primary Schools report makes a similar point about the difficulties created by having too many different activities going on at the same time (Ofsted, 1996c, p. 10) and the related need to train children to work on their own so that the teacher can focus on a group at a time (Ofsted, 1996c, p. 17).

Regarding 'Effective learning time', there is concern in the 1990 HMI report over the variation in reading standards between classes in the same school, reflecting marked variations in the management and organisation of children's time (HMI, 1991b, p. 5). This was particularly manifested in the routine of listening to oral reading which attempted to give 'fair shares for all' and which sometimes meant that very little time could be given to each child (HMI, 1991b, p. 8).

This theme is taken up in the 1991 HMI report. Its evidence suggests that poorer readers need more thorough and consistent teaching than they often receive (HMI, 1992b, p. 1). The Reception/Y1 report notes that a major difference between satisfactory and better teaching was the quality of group work, in which the best teaching was focused on important reading strategies and skills (Ofsted, 1993c). Among the characteristics of 'effective' schools identified by the London schools study were effective direct teaching, the high priority given to reading and the effective use of time (Ofsted, 1996c, p. 62), although this report has been challenged by Peter Mortimore and Harvey Goldstein for attributing 'effectiveness' to schools without using an appropriate longitudinal research design.

There is similar confirmation of the recurrent issues in the Appendix in connection with 'balance and extension'. The 1990 HMI report commends the breadth and coherence of reading experience generally provided by the teachers of classes achieving high standards, breadth that was planned and not left to chance. In the minority of schools which were wedded to a single method of teaching reading, failure was more prevalent (HMI, 1991b, p. 15). This point is repeated in the 1991 report, which also expresses concern that in at least half the Key Stage 2 classes in the sample, children's reading skills and experience were insufficiently extended (HMI, 1992b, p. 2). There is also a concern in the London schools report that in the majority of the 45 schools, pupils' acquaintance with information, research and library skills was *ad hoc* and incomplete (Ofsted, 1996c, p. 14).

The HMI/Ofsted reports which focus specifically on reading draw particular attention to unevenness in the teaching of phonics. In the 1990 report, it is noted that these skills are best taught when they are embedded in activities that are relevant and enjoyable and where

children are helped to put them to use in writing and in making sense of texts they want to read. The report adds that if teachers gave too little attention to the systematic teaching of skills for tackling print, their pupils were often ill-equipped to move on to unfamiliar material. If teachers concentrated too narrowly on the teaching of phonics, their pupils also had too few strategies to tackle unknown words (HMI, 1991b, p. 7).

The findings of the HMI survey in the following year were that phonic skills were nearly always taught, but that this aspect of the work needed to be strengthened in some classes (HMI, 1992b, p. 1). Regular phonics teaching was invariably part of the programme in more effective schools; in less effective schools, the teaching of reading skills, such as phonics, was haphazard and so infrequent as to be ineffective (HMI, 1992b, pp. 5-6). The importance of this teaching is also underlined in relation to how it encourages children consciously to attend to patterns and structures in their spoken language (HMI, 1992b, p. 7; Ofsted, 1993c, p. 6). The London schools report comments, however, that, in its findings, the direct, systematic teaching of phonic work was relatively rare (Ofsted, 1996c, p. 4). It emphasises that phonics is a set of culturally determined conventions and that it cannot be left to be 'discovered' (*ibid.*, p. 9). In Year 2 phonic work was often superficial and ill-planned (p. 13); in Year 6 it was relatively rare, even though many pupils continued to need such teaching (p. 4).

The Appendix and the details from the subject specific reports provide clear indications of the consistency of HMI and Ofsted inspection reports over the past decade when addressing a variety of aspects of literacy education.

The *National Literacy Strategy* incorporates a variety of features to accommodate these:

i. **Teaching Approach**: there is provision for extensive and consistent direct teaching of literacy, related to an objectives-based curriculum *Framework* and which also delineates the range of questioning that teachers can use when working with children in this way. There is detailed guidance on training pupils how to work on their own so that the teacher can focus on a group at a time.

ii. **Effective Learning Time** is provided for through a dedicated Literacy Hour, together with indicators of how at least three more aspects of literacy development can be fostered at other points in the day: individual reading, reading to the class and extended writing.

iii. **Balance and Extension** are major features of the *National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching*. There is provision for consistent attention to the different levels of language and literacy learning by the systematic use of the text-sentence-word level sub-sections in the *Framework*. The sub-sections provide for a comprehensive mapping of each part of the National Curriculum, 'Key Skills', 'Range' and 'Standard English and Language Study'. Illustrative details are included, particularly to encourage attention to the role of different skills and types of text in assisting the extension of literacy throughout the primary years.

iv. **Phonics** Similarly, there is provision for consistent and systematic attention to the teaching of the English alphabetic writing system, in both reading and writing. The specific phonics and spelling work in Years R to 2 is also set out in an appendix (*Framework*, List 3, pp. 64-5). This emphasis reflects the intention of the incoming government in 1997 that it would 'encourage the use of the most effective teaching methods, including phonics for reading...' (Labour Party, 1997, p. 8).

v. **Writing** There is detailed attention to the compositional and presentational aspects of writing through the 'text level' work in composition; the 'sentence level' work in grammatical

awareness, sentence construction and punctuation and revision; and the 'word level' work in spelling, vocabulary and handwriting. The *Framework* (p. 14) also notes that extended writing may need to be tackled in independent work outside the Literacy Hour, thus recognising the central role of reading and writing in many subjects across the curriculum.

vi. **Teachers' Professional Knowledge** The *National Literacy Strategy* supports staff development opportunities on an unprecedented scale, in that three full days of training are provided for the staff in every primary school. The *Training Pack* and its audio-visual components structure this training through carefully timed activities, discussion opportunities and source material. The *Framework* includes a Glossary of terms used. The *NLS* appears to reflect the belief that 'there is a link between the investment in staff development and the learning of children' (Joyce and Showers, 1995, p. 17).

The *NLS* continues the pattern of centralised changes in education which began with the Education Reform Act of 1988. As the research of Andrew Pollard and his colleagues has shown, centralised changes bring with them many demands and dilemmas. However, these changes have also prompted positive developments in teachers' curriculum planning, clarity of aims, teaching repertoires and assessment skills (Pollard *et al.*, 1994). The *NLS* seems likely to contribute further to these broad trends in professional development.

The likely gains from many schools modifying their approaches to literacy teaching are further indicated from several other sources, including annual results from annual Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs).

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Evidence from SATs

The preliminary report from the Literacy Task Force (1997a) notes that these results indicate considerable variation between schools with apparently similar intakes. For example, when those schools with fewer than 5% of pupils on free school meals (i.e. with a highly advantaged intake) are examined, some have 100% of pupils achieving Level 4 while, at the other end of the scale, in some of them as few as 20% of pupils are achieving the same level. Among the most disadvantaged schools, those with more than 40% of pupils on free school meals, the range is from 70% to 0%.

The Task Force viewed this information as indicating an unacceptable range across all primary schools, irrespective of their intake, and argued strongly for school provision to be more consistent, so that schools may achieve in line with the best schools with comparable intakes (LTF, 1997a, p. 11).

Annual national reports on Key Stage 1 and 2 tests and tasks in English provide additional indications of how the *NLS Framework* and Literacy Hour will help to meet the needs of many pupils. The implications for teaching and learning outlined in the reports range over several of the aspects identified in the inspection evidence.

The 1995 report for Key Stage 1 includes the implication that all children working within or towards Level 1 should be provided with an extensive experience of children's literature, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry. In relation to writing in Key Stage 1, children need to be helped to understand the value of writing for a range of purposes and to organise and present their writing in a variety of ways (SCAA, 1995a). Key Stage 2 pupils need practice in extending their reading experience so as to increase their understanding beyond the literal, particularly through discussion and by referring back to what they have read, to enable them to give informed opinions (SCAA, 1995b).

The implications from the 1996 tests and tasks suggest that children's knowledge of phonic strategies needs to be developed in reading middle and final long vowel and consonant phonemes. More opportunities need to be created for children to use inference and deduction and to be assisted in wider reading and extended writing of non-fiction (SCAA, 1997).

The 1997 report suggests that many children in both Key Stages will benefit from greater direct teaching of several aspects of English. These include: the use of inference and deduction in reading; the use of direct speech in stories to move action on, or to shape characters and themes; and different ways of constructing and connecting sentences (QCA, 1998).

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Other research evidence

These sources of inspection and SATs evidence may reflect the lack of established pedagogues for teaching literacy.

In a recent review of reading research in the United Kingdom, Colin Harrison (1999) refers to evidence that, when teachers concentrate their teaching on hearing individual children read, other children may spend up to a third of their time off task. There is also evidence of a lack of teacher approaches specifically to develop reading in the middle school years (10-15 year olds) and the preponderance of 'short burst' classroom reading, lasting less than 15 seconds. The studies which he draws upon were undertaken some years ago, although there is little indication that the issues which Harrison raises would be different if similar research were undertaken now.

This research evidence, like the national reports on SATs performance, indicates that greater use of shared and guided reading and writing are likely to help teachers to teach literacy in a more systematic and sustained way which a daily Literacy Hour provides. Recent national surveys suggest that these teaching approaches were not being widely used (Cato *et al.*, 1992; Ireson *et al.*, 1995; Wragg *et al.*, 1998) and that explicit links between text and word level teaching were not being strategically made. Phonics teaching, for example, was being largely approached by self-contained packages, kits and work cards (Beard and Willcocks, in press). Ireson *et al.* report some use of 'big books' but only with very young age-ranges. These findings are in marked contrast with the systematic use of such teaching approaches which was part of the *National Literacy Project*.

Related Items

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http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/publications/?pub_id=119&art_id=561&top_id=122

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The National Literacy Project

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The *National Literacy Project (NLP)* was set up in the spring of 1996 in 15 local Education Authorities. It had the following aims:

- to improve standards of literacy in participating primary schools in line with national expectations;
- to provide detailed support to schools and teachers through a structured programme and consultancy support;
- through the national network, to develop detailed, practical guidance on teaching methods and activities, and to disseminate these to the project schools;
- to disseminate the work of the *NLP* to other, non-participating LEAs and institutions;
- to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

The rationale of the *NLP* drew upon the school management and teaching quality evidence from research and school inspection. Its contents were influenced by the *First Steps* curriculum materials from Western Australia (Dewsbury, 1994). Participating schools implemented two key structures, a *Framework for Teaching* and the Literacy Hour. These were earlier versions of what were subsequently to be included in the *NLS*, as described in the Introduction to this *Review*.

The *Framework* provided schools with a means of shifting the emphasis in planning for the revised National Curriculum for English (DfE, 1995) from 'what' to 'how'. This was done by using three strands (text level, sentence level and word level) to provide coverage, balance and progression in literacy teaching. The purpose of this *Framework* was to present teachers not with increased prescription but with a wide range of new and challenging decisions about tasks, activities and methods (Stannard, 1997).

Teachers were given further assistance in this by the use of objectives for each of the three levels of teaching for each term of the seven primary school years. In Y1-6, there were separate, sometimes overlapping, objectives for each of the 18 terms. For the Reception age-range, there were objectives for the whole year.

The use of objectives for curriculum planning draws on the tradition of educational thinking going back to the work of Ralph Tyler. Tyler (1949, p. 3) acknowledges that excellent educational work can be done by teachers who do not have a clear conception of goals but who have an intuitive sense of what is good teaching. He adds, however, that, if an educational programme is to be planned and if efforts for continued improvement are to be made, it is very necessary to have some conception of the goals that are being pursued. These educational objectives become the criteria by which materials are selected, content

outlined, teaching approaches developed and assessment procedures prepared. Tyler's subsequent work confirmed the importance of arriving at educational objectives on the basis of considered judgement, taking account of the demands of society, the characteristics of pupils, the potential contributions which various fields of learning may make, the social and educational philosophy of the school and what is known about the attainability of the various types of objectives (Madaus and Stufflebeam, 1989, p. 105).

The *NLS* extends the use of objectives in two innovative ways beyond the programmes of study set out in the National Curriculum. Firstly, its structured and routinised approach allows teachers to share and explain the objectives with their pupils. This sharing can develop a common sense of purpose in the classroom. It can increase a sense of responsibility in independent working. The recursive features in the objectives can extend the sense of purpose across yearly transitions. Shared objectives, translated into appropriate language, can also help to focus on key points in plenary sessions. There is a helpful supporting literature on these aspects of the *NLS* in Palinscar and Brown (1984).

Secondly, the *NLS Framework* encourages the use of a 'language for literacy'. Key technical terms are listed separately as a checklist for teachers. The terms are grouped in the year groups when they first occur in the *Framework* and it is noted that most should also become part of pupils' developing vocabulary. A separate glossary in the *Framework* provides definitions. The relationship between literacy learning and the use of an associated meta-language of technical terms is a complex one. Both are likely to assist the other. However, as the report of the Kingman Committee pointed out, it is just as important to teach children about our language environment as about our physical environment. In relation to the structure and uses of language, there is no positive advantage in ignorance (DES, 1988, p. 4). Providing that language experience is wide-ranging and purposeful, much meta-linguistic learning is likely to involve making implicit learning explicit. Many technical terms can provide a helpful form of shorthand in relation to this process, crystallising understanding in unambiguous references which have far-reaching educational and social currency. These issues are discussed by Olson (1984) and Garner (1987).

The daily amount of time allocated to dedicated literacy teaching was derived from the Final Report of the review of the National Curriculum and its Assessment by Sir Ron Dearing. Assuming a 36 week teaching year, to allow a margin for the induction of new pupils, assessment work, school events and educational visits (Dearing, 1994, p. 30), the Dearing Report recommended that 180 hours of English be taught directly in Key Stage 1, an hour a day in the 36 weeks referred to above. A related recommendation was that another 36 hours were to be taught through other subjects. In Key Stage 2 the figures were 162 and 18 respectively.

The *NLP* was evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (Sainsbury, 1998). Data were collected from 250 schools on:

- *children's progress in reading between October 1996 and March 1998, using the following tests:*
    - The *Primary Reading Test* for 6851 Y1/2 pupils
    - *Progress in English 8* and *9* for 6898 Y3/4 pupils (comprehension, spelling and punctuation)
    - *Progress in English 10* and *11* for 7297 Y5/6 pupils (as above).

The test results revealed a significant and substantial improvement over the 18 month period. Final test scores had improved by approximately six standardised score points for Y3/4 and Y5/6 pupils. This is equivalent to 8 to 12 months progress *over and above* what is expected in these ages. For Y1/2 pupils the increase was nearly twice as large again, at 11.5 standardised score points.

Girls had higher average scores than boys and made more progress during the project. Children eligible for free school meals, those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language had lower scores. However, all these groups also made statistically significant progress. All ethnic groups benefited equally.

- *children's attitudes in reading at the above two time points, using questionnaires completed by 7053 Y3/4 children and 7559 Y5/6 children*

  The analysis combined children's responses into three factors:

  - needing help with reading - this factor showed a significant decline in the course of the project;
  - enjoyment of reading - scores did not change significantly in the course of the project;
  - preferring comics and magazines to stories and other books - this was particularly the case for boys and also for older children.

- *how well the training and support met the needs of participating schools, using questionnaires completed by headteachers of project schools (186 in spring 1998 and 154 in summer 1998)*

  Headteachers regarded the introduction of the Literacy Hour overwhelmingly positively. They also pointed out that it had major implications in terms of management and resourcing.

- *the characteristics of teaching, learning and management in schools implementing the project, using descriptive reports from project LEAs and LEA ratings of how well the project was implemented in their schools*

  The role of the headteacher in successful school projects was crucial, in providing committed, engaged and informed leadership in the management of the new initiative. The project was given a high priority in the development plans of successful schools. Effective teaching with the Literacy Hour was characterised by consistency, clear structure, high quality interaction and good pace. Such teaching was underpinned by thorough planning.

The *National Literacy Project* was also evaluated by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (Ofsted, 1998c). The evaluation focused on the 250 schools which began the *Project* in 1996 and comprised three visits each to 20% of the schools. The report notes that nearly all the 250 schools were in urban, disadvantaged areas. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals was 37%, twice the national average. The vast majority of the 55 schools visited by the HMI had a low baseline of attainment in English. Over 300 Literacy Hours were observed and discussions were held with headteachers and staff. Meetings were also held with literacy consultants and their line managers in each LEA.

Significant improvements are reported in the quality of teaching. In the majority of schools, the *NLP* was also an important catalyst in raising standards of literacy. The report refers to data from the NFER evaluation, summarised above, and provides further data from National Curriculum SATs results. In both Key Stages these results showed that overall progress made in three-quarters of the *NLP* schools was in line with, or better than, the national average. Standards improved by more than the national average in approximately half of the *NLP* schools. The report acknowledges the limitations of year on year comparisons when different cohorts of pupils are involved. However, it suggests that, along with the NFER data, the SATs evidence provides further indications of the effectiveness of the *National Literacy Project*.

The HMI evaluation also reports some recurrent weaknesses in less

effective schools. In the teaching of the Literacy Hour, word level work, especially phonics, was not taught systematically or given the required emphasis. The purposes of, and the teacher's role in, guided reading were not always understood. The headteacher's leadership was sometimes unconvincing. In three of the 18 LEAs there were substantial weaknesses in communication which hampered the support which could be given to schools.

These evaluations of the *National Literacy Project* underline the need for its general model of reading and writing to be carefully considered, as well as the evidence on school effectiveness and management which were discussed earlier.

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The General Model Of Reading And Writing In The Framework For Teaching

The model of reading and writing used in the *Framework* uses a consistent sub-division between 'word level', 'sentence level' and 'text level' work. These distinctions are common in linguistic description:

- The word is the smallest free-standing unit of linguistic description. (Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning but may not be independent e.g. 'un-' or '-ness'; words can also be single morphemes e.g. 'book'.)
- The sentence is the largest linguistic unit within which grammatical rules systematically operate.
- A text (sometimes referred to as 'discourse') is a collection of one or more sentences that display a coherent theme and appropriate grammatical cohesion.

Other more detailed distinctions can be built on these. For instance, phonemes, the smallest sound units which contrast with each (e.g. /b/ or /r/), exist below word level. Clauses are part of sentence level. Phrases exist between sentence/clause level and word level.

The word/sentence/text level distinctions are a convenient way of referring to the visual features of what we read and write and are helpful in providing consistent points of reference for teachers and pupils when talking about the processes and products of literacy learning.

The distinctions are found in a number of scholarly publications in linguistics. For instance, David Crystal (1995) makes a distinction in a diagram of the 'structure' of English between 'text' (a coherent, self-contained unit of discourse), 'grammar' (the system of rules governing the construction of sentences) and 'lexicon' (the vocabulary of a language). The model also contains the elements for the 'transmission' of the language, the *graphology*, the writing system of vowels, consonants etc., and the *phonology*, the system of sounds (phonemes), on which the writing system is based.

Other writers who use a similar three-level model of language include Katharine Perera (1979) who, in a paper on the linguistic difficulty of school textbooks, makes distinctions between discourse (text), sentence and word levels which are very similar to those used in the *Framework*. The Kingman Report adopts a similar three-level model (word forms, phrase/sentence structure and discourse structure) and indicates how word forms are created in English by associating speech sounds with alphabet letters (DES, 1988, Figure 1).

Such sub-divisions are rarely all-embracing and some strands of language may cut across them. For instance, grammatical rules apply *within* words (morphology) as well as *between* words (syntax). Meaning is conveyed at word level (vocabulary) as well as at discourse or text level. Punctuation is part of the graphology but also plays an important role in confirming the grammatical rules which are being used.

Related Items

Watching and Learning: Evaluation of the Implementation of the NLNS: First Annual Report and Summary

The *Framework* uses a sub-division which reflects the visual features of written language, word, sentence and text. Vocabulary is combined with phonics and spelling at word level. Morphology is also dealt with at word level (within-word rules involving prefixes, suffixes, roots etc.) as part of 'graphic knowledge' in reading (common letter patterns) and as part of spelling conventions in writing. Sentence level details deal with between-word rules (syntax). Punctuation is also included in the sentence level details of the *Framework* because punctuation is mainly used to separate units of grammar (sentences, clauses, phrases, words) from each other or to indicate contractions *(I'll)* or possession *(John's)*. Only a few punctuation features specifically express meaning (e.g. question and exclamation marks) (Crystal, 1987, p. 205). Text level details deal with the structures of discourse, as well as the comprehension and composition of the meanings which written discourse can convey.

This integration of language strands is an indication that successful reading and writing will involve bringing together information from a range of sources, semantic, grammatical and grapho-phonic. If we come across the word *wind*, for instance, we cannot be sure of how to pronounce it or what word class it represents (noun or verb). Our uncertainties can only be resolved when we draw upon additional semantic and grammatical information from the surrounding context ('The wind blew' or 'He had to wind up the clock'). Similarly, we may be able to pronounce the word *sound*, but be unable to attribute meaning until we have more contextual information associated with hearing a sound, or being safe and sound, or anchoring in a sound, or deciding to sound an alarm and so on. The need for such an integration is acknowledged in the structure of the Literacy Hour which ensures that text level, sentence level and word level objectives are consistently addressed and cross-referenced. Drawing upon these different sources of information in fluent reading is referred to in the *Framework* as using the full range of 'searchlights' in tackling texts.

Recent research-based models of early reading and fluent reading suggest that reading is neither 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' in nature. Instead, sources of contextual, comprehension, visual and phonological information are simultaneously interactive, issuing and accommodating to and from each other (Adams and Bruck, 1993). Related research is reported in sources such as Rumelhart and McClelland (1986) and Seidenberg and McClelland (1989).

There is a similar bringing together of information from a range of sources in the composition of writing. Words have to be selected from long-term memory, spelled according to convention and ordered in grammatically acceptable sequences. The emerging text can be re-read as a whole to check whether it is fulfilling the demands of the task and the needs of the audience. The searchlights here have to be directed more critically in order to ensure that what is being written is likely to satisfy certain genre constraints and other socio-cultural considerations. In other words, the writer has to ensure that what is being written is likely to be seen in the best possible light.

One of the most influential models of writing in recent years has been that of John Hayes and Linda Flower (1980) which links planning, 'translating' (or transcription) and reviewing to be wider influences on writing such as the task environment and the writer's long-term memory. Very recently Hayes (1996) has put forward a revised model which gives greater emphasis to the role of working memory, visual-spatial as well as linguistic representations, motivation and the social environment (including both audience and anyone collaborating in the writing). However, one important continuity between the two versions of the model exploits another analogy which can be linked to the searchlights one, that a writer resembles a very busy switchboard operator trying to juggle a number of demands and constraints.

The *NLS Framework* not only draws upon these models of reading and writing but also promotes some of the key links between them. The Year 1 writing composition objectives include 'through shared and guided writing to apply phonological, graphic knowledge and sight vocabulary to spell words correctly' (DfEE, 1998a, p. 20). There is a range of similar links which encourage the use of knowledge gained from reading in structuring writing, for instance in story settings (Y1 term 3), in writing instructions (Y2 term 1), in using structures from poems (Y2 term 2), in adapting story themes or writing story sequels (Y3 term 2) or in using different genres as models for

writing (Y6 term 2).

The value of exploiting reciprocal links between reading and writing has been highlighted in a succession of publications by Marie Clay (e.g. Clay, 1980; 1991; 1993). Her work shows especially how phonemic segmentation can be encouraged by writing. In the early stages of literacy, children intuitively draw upon their phonemic awareness when attempting to write words. Regular opportunities to do this may, in the long term, support reading development even more than spelling development. As will be discussed later, success in spelling draws more on visual familiarity with the writing system.

Research with older students suggests that writing in combination with reading prompts more critical thinking than reading alone, writing alone or either activity combined with questions (Tierney *et al.*, 1989).

Recent curriculum development work in Australia has shown how reading-writing links can be productively exploited in teaching non-fiction genres. Australian genre theory has been inspired by the work of Michael Halliday (1985). It has been concentrated on the kinds of factual writing which schools expect pupils to generate. The term 'genre' has been used to connect the different forms which texts take with variations in social purpose (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993, p. 7). Researchers such as Jim Martin (1989) have tried to make more 'visible' what has to be learned in factual writing genres such as reports, explanations, procedures, discussions and recounts. Martin's work has been taken up by curriculum development initiatives such as the Disadvantaged Schools Programme in Sydney. The use of shared reading as a resource for shared writing is a major strategy (Callaghan and Rothery, 1988).

There are three stages in this approach:

i. modelling: sharing information about the uses and features of the genre (grammar, format etc.);

ii. joint construction of a new text in the same genre by pupils and teacher;

iii. independent construction of another new text in the same genre by pupils, with drafting/editing consultation with peers and teacher and publication/evaluation.

The cycle can be repeated, working on increasingly more sophisticated aspects of the genre (Derewianka, 1990). These kinds of possibilities for linking reading and writing are reflected in a number of cross references between the reading comprehension and writing composition objectives of the *NLS Framework*.

Overall, the general model of reading and writing the *Framework* is the kind of comprehensive model which has been found to be most helpful in supporting several initiatives which have reported success in early literacy education. These include: the kinds of general practices found in New Zealand schools (Ofsted, 1993e); a review of 'what works for slow readers' (Brooks *et al.*, 1998); a study of what characterises 'effective teachers of literacy' (Medwell *et al.*, 1998); the 'LIFT' project (Riley *et al.*, 1998; Sylva *et al.*, in press); and specific intervention programmes (Clay, 1993; Hatcher, Hulme and Ellis, 1994; Wasik and Slavin, 1993). The specific features of the model can be further revealed as each of the generic teaching aspects is discussed.

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- The Reception age-range
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- Shared writing
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The Reception age-range

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The Reception age-range requires a separate section in this *Review* because, in the *Framework*, it is the only age-range which has yearly, rather than termly, objectives. In addition, it is the only age-range for which additional guidance is provided (DfEE, 1998a, pp. 102-5).

The *Framework* thus makes considerable concession to the highly variable experience and skills with which children begin schools. Provision and practice in the Reception age-range are likely to benefit from an understanding of the oral language development which precedes literacy (e.g. Wells, 1985; Garton and Pratt, 1989) and the patterns of pre-school literacy development (e.g. Clay, 1998). The publication of *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning* (SCAA, 1996) made explicit links between Reception practice and provision in Nursery Education. Reception practice is also likely to be assisted by some form of collaboration between homes and schools to promote early literacy development (e.g. Hannon, 1995; Weinberger, 1996; Wolfendale and Topping, 1996), including Family Literacy programmes (Brooks, Gorman *et al.*, 1996; see also Wade and Moore, 1996).

Such collaboration is likely to make links with several strands of the *NLS Framework*. Chief among these is the importance of reading stories to children, which is immediately taken up in the text level work. The importance of reading to pre-school children was emphasised by the Bullock Report (DES, 1975, p. 97). It has received support from sources which reflect very different traditions of research and scholarship (e.g. Meek, 1982; Wells, 1987; Book Trust, 1998). A recent meta-analysis of quantitative research has confirmed that joint book reading by parents and pre-schoolers is significantly related to a range of outcome measures such as language growth, emergent literacy and reading attainment (Bus *et al.*, 1995). Detailed case studies by Carol Fox (1993) have shown how pre-school experience of children's literature can influence children's oral story telling.

Another key link between pre-school provision and the *NLS Framework* is the enjoyment and learning of nursery rhymes and other forms of word-play. The intention is to encourage children's phonological development, their ability to hear speech sounds and, in particular, sounds in words. Researchers have associated phonological development with early success in learning to read for some years. One of the most influential publications in this area was that by Bradley and Bryant (1983) which reported a longitudinal study of 368 children and the finding that children's sensitivity to rhyme was a particularly important predictor of subsequent success in reading.

Subsequent work by Goswami and Bryant (1990) indicated that there may be a series of causal connections between early phonological development and learning to read, including between pre-school awareness of rhyme and alliteration and later progress in reading and spelling, particularly through the use of analogies. Recent publications have challenged this conclusion and suggested that awareness of phonemes is a more significant predictor of later reading success (Muter *et al.*, 1997 and in press; Nation and Hulme, 1997). This debate is continuing (Goswami, 1999) but two key issues seem agreed. Firstly, there is a significant connection between children's phonological

development and their later reading success, linking orally and literacy in highly specific ways. Secondly, children's phonological development follows a clear pattern, from being aware of syllables, to being aware of onsets and rimes within syllables, to being aware of phonemes (Treiman and Zukowski, 1996).

These two areas of agreement are reflected in the emphasis on promoting children's phonological development in the *NLS Framework* and are discussed again later in the section of the *Review* which deals with Phonics and Spelling.

There are also strong links between children's 'orthographic' development on entry to school and their subsequent progress. Children's ability to write their name without a model has been found to be correlated with a number of aspects of writing at 7 years (Blatchford, 1991). In addition, there is a strong link between children's early letter-name knowledge and their subsequent reading development (Blatchford *et al.*, 1987; Blatchford and Plewis, 1990). However, the results on later attainment from the direct teaching of letter names have been largely inconclusive (Riley, 1996).

The explanation for this apparent paradox may be that letter-name knowledge is often an indication of broader literacy experience and learning. Names provide an unambiguous way of referring to alphabetic letters as 'objects', particularly if the recognition of individual letters can be related to the 'pegs' provided by first learning the alphabet (Adams, 1990). Learning to read and write, however, also involves treating letters as 'symbols' which represent sounds (Bialystok, 1991, cited in Riley, 1996). The *NLS Framework* gives emphasis to sound-symbol relationships, while encouraging the learning of letter names as part of 'alphabetic knowledge'. Handwriting using the correct sequence of hand movements is also encouraged in Reception Year objectives.

Finally, the Reception age-range warrants a separate section in this *Review* because its teachers have to strike a balance between promoting early progress and avoiding an inappropriate emphasis on academic provision for children so young. This issue has recently attracted attention because of school funding arrangements which encourage schools to accept pupils soon after their fourth birthday.

While the concerns about inappropriate provision are very valid, they have in turn to be related to the findings of a three year study of 33 schools by Barbara Tizard *et al.* (1988) that children made relatively more progress in literacy learning between beginning school and the end of the Reception year than they did in any of the following three school years. The importance of the first year of school is also extensively discussed by Jeni Riley (1996). Research on the Reception age-range underlines the significance of the 'windows of opportunity' which schools have to exploit, particularly in relation to disadvantaged pupils, as was discussed earlier in this *Review* (Crévola and Hill, 1998). The research also underlines the role of the school in creating the conditions for such windows to exist.

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Shared reading, in which teacher and pupils simultaneously read aloud to a large format text, has been especially promoted in the writing of Don Holdaway (1979, 1982). His publications are based on his work as a teacher in developing new methods which were appropriate for the increasingly multicultural schools of Auckland, New Zealand. He was particularly interested in developing methods which resembled the visual intimacy with print which characterises the pre-school book experience of parents reading with their children. He was also interested in developing literacy out of song and chant. Holdaway suggests that the use of 'big books' and shared reading enables the teacher to display the skill of reading in purposeful use, while keeping before pupils' attention the fact that the process is print-stimulated.

It is interesting to note that Holdaway's early work did not involve commercially produced big books. Instead it involved the teacher transcribing popular texts in bold print onto large 'newsprint' paper or overhead transparencies. Illustrations were kept simple or omitted, as the pupils could savour the originals when they returned to the original normal-sized books in independent reading. The bold print needed to be seen clearly from fifteen feet or so (Holdaway, 1979, p. 66).

In subsequent publications, Holdaway elaborates further on some of the key principles in successful shared book experience:

- the texts used need to be those which children enjoy
- the teacher needs to present new material with wholehearted enjoyment
- the ancient satisfactions of chant and song can be used to sustain the feelings of involvement among pupils
- teaching-learning sequences can be developed to revisit favourite poems, jingles, songs and stories; to attend to words, letters and sounds; to use a new story to model and explain word-solving strategies; to link shared reading to independent and group reading and writing (Holdaway, 1982; Park, 1982).

The practicalities of the use of big book formats for shared reading have also been extensively discussed in North American publications for teachers (e.g. Slaughter, 1983; Combs, 1987; Ribowsky, 1986; Trachtenburg and Ferruggina, 1989; Strickland and Morrow, 1990; Karges-Bone, 1992; Swindal, 1993; Button and Johnson, 1997) and in a collection of articles published in London by the Centre for Language in Primary Education (CLPE, 1990).

The effectiveness of shared reading compared with 'round-robin' reading has been systematically researched by Lloyd Eldredge, Ray Rentzel and Paul Hollingsworth at Brigham Young University. 78 seven year olds received either round robin or shared reading teaching in two matched groups for thirty minutes a day for four months. The same books were used for both groups. After four months, the shared

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reading group had significantly higher scores on tests of reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. There was evidence that the supported reading experience of the shared reading group had the greatest impact on the word recognition abilities of the pupils who initially were the poorest readers.

Research by Warwick Elley (1989) also indicates the value of 'text level' teaching in relation to word level objectives such as those connected with vocabulary acquisition. Evidence from two experiments shows how reading to children can be a significant source of vocabulary growth, particularly when accompanied by teacher explanation of unfamiliar words, which can double the rate of vocabulary acquisition.

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'Guided reading' is an approach in which the teacher works with a small group of pupils who use similar reading processes and are able to read similar levels of text with support (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996). The teacher (i) introduces a text to the group; (ii) works briefly with individuals as they simultaneously read their own copy at their own individual pace; and (iii) may select one or two points for the whole group to consolidate or extend their reading experience. The ultimate goal of guided reading is to help children learn how to use independent reading strategies successfully. It has several advantages over hearing children read on an entirely individual basis. It substantially increases the time which children actually spend reading. It creates a helpful social context for reading and responding to texts. It allows the teacher to make considered decisions in drawing the children's attention to significant points of interest.

The social context of guided group reading may play an even more beneficial role when it is extended to small-group guided silent reading with Key Stage 2 pupils. In a videotaped study of a hundred 8-9 year olds in four different classes, Ian Wilkinson and Richard Anderson (1995) report some key differences between the group dynamics of silent and oral (turn-taking) reading. Pupils were more attentive during silent reading and more responsive to story content during discussion, giving teachers much to capitalise upon in fostering comprehension and engagement.

The choice of text for guided reading needs to be especially finely tuned. The text needs to be one which children can read with the strategies which they already have but one which provides for a small amount of new learning. As a rule of thumb, the children need to be able to read about 90% accurately after the teacher's introduction and with the teacher's support (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 6). The purpose of guided reading is to enable children to use and develop strategies 'on the run'. It takes advantage of social support and makes more efficient use of the teacher's time.

Margaret Mooney (1995) makes a number of additional practical suggestions. The teacher needs to give detailed consideration to the children's reading capabilities, so that the introduction to the book can be focused on the appropriate aspects of language, structure or content. However, not too much of the story should be revealed or the text will not offer sufficient challenge. On the other hand, too many initial questions may overwhelm children. The final discussion should be similarly balanced.

Guided reading is a fairly recent development in literacy education (Mooney, 1990) but one which is attracting increasing attention. Recent publications include a thesis by Lorie Strech (1995) who discusses in detail the issues raised by the use of ability groups for teaching literacy as part of a balanced approach which includes whole class and individual work.

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Shared writing

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Shared writing, the joint construction of a text by teacher and pupils, has attracted increasing attention in educational publications. It has built upon research which has revealed the complexity of the writing process (Hayes and Flower, 1980; Hayes, 1996) and the recognition of the value of teachers modelling what is involved.

After over a hundred experiments into the psychological aspects of writing, Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia (1987, pp. 362-3) make a number of recommendations:

- pupils (and teachers) need to be made aware of the full extent of the composing process;
- the thinking that goes on in composition needs to be modelled by the teacher;
- pupils will benefit from reviewing their own writing strategies and knowledge;
- pupils need a supportive and congenial writing environment, but will also benefit from experiencing the struggles that are an integral part of developing writing skill;
- pupils may also benefit from using various 'facilitating' techniques to help them through the initial stages of acquiring more complex processes e.g. listing words which may be used, points which may be made or the wording of final sentences etc., in advance of tackling the full text.

Shared writing provides a common forum for exploring and considering such possibilities. Various practical suggestions have been set out for using shared writing in supporting early writing development (where it is sometimes refered to as 'scribing') by John Nicholls *et al.*, 1989; Anne Browne, 1993; Dominic Wyse, 1998; and in a collection of articles published by the Centre for Language in Primary Education (CLPE, 1990). The success of shared writing is likely to be related to the teacher's skill in using dialogue to provide scaffolded understanding of what is involved in writing (Applebee and Langer, 1983; Palinscar, 1986; Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). 'Scaffolding' refers to a process that enables pupils to solve a problem or carry out a task which would be beyond their unassisted efforts. A key resource in this process is pupils' experience as readers.

The use of shared writing in supporting more extended and genre-specific writing was discussed earlier in the *Review* (section on 'The general model of reading and writing in the *Framework*'). The *NLS Framework* supports the use of such dialogue through its text, sentence and world level objectives. These may be strategically used in helping pupils to understand the different aspects of writing and how transcription can be helped by purposeful planning and careful revision and review. Meta-analyses of research evidence suggests that provision for writing development is most effective if writing is

undertaken when teachers and pupils discuss and tackle targeted writing tasks in a spirit of inquiry and problem-solving (Hillocks, 1986; 1995). The use of shared writing is underpinned by the recognition that writing is a craft which can be taught (Fairfax and Moat, 1981). The same is true of the use of guided writing.

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Guided writing

Guided writing is a pragmatic aspect of managing children's independent writing in the Literacy Hour. It allows the teacher to support and encourage pupils who are tackling a similar task and to monitor their use of the range of skills and processes in writing (Hayes and Flower, 1980; Hayes, 1996). Close observation of pupils gives teachers information on the way pupils are composing a text, the fluency of their transcription skills (grammatical order, handwriting and spelling) and how far they are re-reading and revising. As in guided reading, the sense of shared context assists the teacher in exploiting common concerns and to draw upon the key links between reading and writing.

The teacher's interventions will be guided by the pupils' stage of development and the nature of the task. A range of publications are available to support teachers in judging various elements of pupils' spelling (e.g. Temple *et al.*, 1993; Peters and Smith, 1993; Mudd, 1994) and handwriting (e.g. Sassoon, 1990; 1995). Their choice of vocabulary and grammatical order will need to be judged in the context of the nature of the task: prose or poetry, fiction or information, and the genres and styles which are appropriate (see later generic sections of the *Review*). Other publications provide insights into children's engagement with the writing process (e.g. Graves, 1983; 1994). Guided writing thus brings many possibilities together in a focused and manageable context. It can also help to set writing in motion which can be extended after the Literacy Hour has ended.

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Phonics and spelling

Phonics

In recent years there have been two substantial changes in how fluent reading is understood: firstly in relation to how the relationships between word recognition and the use of context are viewed and secondly in relation to the role of phonological processing.

For some years fluent reading was held to be a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' by some writers. This view assumed that fluent reading was characterised by increasing use of contextual cues and minimal use of visual cues. In the last twenty years a great deal of evidence has been put forward in support of the opposite view: that it is less-skilled readers who are more dependent on context in word recognition. The word recognition processes of skilled readers are so rapid and automatic that they generally do not need to rely on contextual information - except to decide between homonyms (as with *'wind'*).

These changing views of the nature of fluent reading and their influences on educational practice have been discussed by researchers such as Marilyn Jager Adams (1990; 1991); Jessie Reid (1993); Keith Stanovich (1994) and Charles Perfetti (1995).

It should be noted that, although the skills of the fluent reader are distinguished by fast, context-free, word recognition, where the effective reader does use context extensively is in comprehension. Indeed, Perfetti concludes that the hallmark of skilled reading is fast context-free word identification and rich context-dependent text understanding (as with the example of 'safe and *sound*', which was referred to in the 'General Model' section).

Views related to the roles of phonological processes have undergone a similar change, although some issues remain unresolved. There is now much more interest in the nature of the English alphabetic writing system: 26 alphabetic letters are used as graphemes, singly and as digraphs (e.g. sh) and trigraphs (e.g. igh) to represent approximately 44 speech sounds (phonemes). As a recent major survey of English spelling shows (Carney, 1994), the correspondences between phonemes and graphemes are in some cases highly consistent: the phoneme /b/ is represented by the letter b 98% of the time. The small exceptions are the double letter bb in words like rabbit and the bu in build. Other correspondences are less consistent. The /i/ as in kid is represented by the letter i only in 61% of correspondences. In about 20% of these correspondences this phoneme is represented by y (e.g. hymn). It is also represented by e (e.g. English: 16% of correspondences) and very occasionally by ee (breeches), ie (sieve), o (women) and u (busy): totalling 2% of correspondences.

The reasons for these variations will often be explained in an etymological dictionary. They are related to many historical and cultural influences and sometimes arbitrary decisions taken by printers and lexicographers centuries ago.

These variations are an important reminder that phonics teaching needs to

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be well informed and undertaken with a sense of proportion regarding the patterns and inconsistencies of the English orthography. As Perfetti (1995) argues, the central fact for learning to read is not only learning to get meaning from print, which is in itself an incomplete idea. It is also that a child must learn a writing system, specifically how the writing system encodes his or her language.

The central importance of phonemic processing in reading development has been increasingly highlighted by research on both sides of the Atlantic (e.g. Liberman, 1971; Morris, 1984; Rieben and Perfetti, 1991; Gough *et al.*, 1992, Shimron, 1996; Macmillan, 1997; Byrne, 1998, McGuinness, 1998).

The *National Literacy Strategy Framework* follows the recommendations of such reviews of research evidence as that in *Beginning to Read* by Marilyn Jager Adams which was commissioned by the USA Congress (Adams, 1990). Adams' conclusions were that teaching approaches in which systematic code instruction is included along with the reading and writing of meaningful text results in superior reading achievement overall, both for low-readiness and better prepared pupils (Adams, 1993, p. 213).

The *NLS Framework* draws on a number of indications from research that effective phonics teaching is likely to include:

i. the promotion of early phonological development, upon which literacy teaching can build (Goswami and Bryant, 1990) (see the earlier section on the Reception age-range);

ii. the teacher's skill in helping children to hear phonemes in the words they read, to segment these sounds (analytic phonics) and to blend them together into meaningful units (synthetic phonics) (Goodacre, 1971; see also Liberman and Shankweiler, 1991; Byrne, 1998; McGuinness, 1998);

iii. the use of texts which motivate and support children in learning the written code (Clay, 1991);

iv. opportunities for children to explore word families in reading and writing, to consolidate their knowledge of phoneme-grapheme relationships (Adams, 1990);

v. the encouragement of pupils to orchestrate phonic knowledge in building up reading fluency in ways which help them to integrate and cross-check information from different 'searchlight' sources. These sources include the comprehension of the text as a whole, the anticipation of word and letter sequences and the rapid recognition of words which are already known (Stanovich and Stanovich, 1995).

The *Framework* provides a separate list of the specific phonics and spelling work (List 3, pp. 64-5) to allow teachers to plan teaching around these sorts of considerations. The *Framework* also encourages early letter-name knowledge (see the earlier section of this *Review* on the Reception age-range). In addition, the *Framework* includes two other Lists (1 and 2, pp. 60-63) of high and medium frequency words to be taught in YR-2 and 4-5 respectively. These lists are drawn from a number of sources (e.g. Carroll *et al.*, 1971; Reid, 1989; Huxford, 1994) and represent a substantial proportion of the words which children are likely to need to have in their sight vocabularies and be able to write independently. The words will be learned through the word, sentence and text level teaching, but the Lists can also be used by teachers in checking the learning of these high frequency 'building blocks' of comprehension and composition.

Handwriting

As Tom Gorman and Greg Brooks (1996) point out, learning to write alphabet letters correctly involves very careful observation, hand control and co-ordination. Moreover, children come across many different types and sizes of script. Learning to use the particular forms of script used by teachers may require a good deal of practice.

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By providing a number of detailed 'word level' objectives, the *NLS Framework* recognises this need for practice. It also draws upon the insights provided by researchers like Rosemary Sassoon (1990). She alerts us to a number of concepts that govern our writing system:

1. Direction: written English is arranged from left to right and top to bottom down the page.
2. Movement: letters have correct movements, with definite starting and exit points.
3. Height: letters have specific height differences.
4. Several letters are mirror images of each other and may need extra care in teaching. Depending on various type faces these can include b-d; m-w; n-u; p-q.
5. Capital and lower case letters are used differently.
6. Spaces are used consistently between letters and words.

Sassoon's research has convinced her that few of these concepts come naturally to children. What is more, her investigations have suggested that, unless errors in relation to this learning are corrected early on, they may prove difficult to alter later. The *NLS Framework* follows this suggestion with early objectives to develop a comfortable and efficient pencil grip and to form letters correctly in a script that will be easy to join later. Subsequent objectives build on these.

Spelling

One of the most influential publications on spelling in recent years has been a paper by Richard Gentry (1982). Gentry outlines a five-stage model of spelling development, using data from a case study by Glenda Bissex (1980) of her own son's early writing.

1.	'Pre-Communicative': Using symbols from the alphabet to represent words.	The learner shows some alphabetic knowledge through production of letter forms to represent messages, but there may be a random stringing together of upper and lower case letters and the speller may or may not use left-right direction.
2.	'Semi-phonetic': First attempts to use an alphabetic system.	The writing is generally set out left-right and letters begin to be used to represent sounds, although spelling may be 'abbreviated' (one letter representing a longer word).
3.	'Phonetic': A complete mapping of sounds and letters.	The writing maps sounds to symbols in a systematic way, but the speller concentrates on *sounds* rather than the spelling system, using acceptable letter sequences.
4.	'Transitional': Some phonetic and some conventional spelling.	Basic spelling conventions are generally followed e.g. a vowel in every syllable and all necessary letters are often included although there may be some reversals.
5.	'Conventional': The basis of a knowledge of English orthography is firmly established.	The learner uses knowledge of word structure, including prefixes, suffixes and compound words and shows growing accuracy in using silent and double consonants etc. The learner can think of alternative spellings; can use visual identification of misspelled words for corrections; and continues to learn uncommon and irregular spellings.

It is important to bear in mind several cautions about such stage models, which attempt to map out complex patterns of thinking and behaviour. It is not always possible to place a child at a stage on the basis of a small

sample of writing and the some researchers have expressed reservations about this (Treiman, 1993; Snowling, 1994). Features of more than one stage may be found in a piece of writing as a child's spelling moves from one stage to the next. At the same time, Gentry's model does seem to provide a clear sense of direction. There is little evidence that spelling development substantially regresses once one stage of development is reached.

Another caution is that development is fostered by purposeful writing and sympathetic adult support. Glenda Bissex (1980) reports that, even within one stage of development, the phonetic, her son wrote signs, lists, notes, letters, labels and captions, stories, greeting cards, game boards, directions and statements.

It is also important to recognise that parents and teachers can have a great deal of influence on children's spelling. In fact, in her study of nearly 1,000 Key Stage 2 children, Margaret Peters (1970) found that progress in spelling was influenced more by what teachers did than by any other factor. Furthermore, Peters found that, in addition to verbal and visual memory abilities, the use of swift, well-formed handwriting seemed to assist children in learning common letter strings and to contribute to success in spelling.

A final caution is that spelling development should be related to reading development. For years it has been known that spelling is not the flip-side of reading (Frith, 1985; Ehri, 1997). In fact these two skills develop out of step with each other:

- many children try to begin to read by using an 'logographic' approach, attending to and remembering whole words;
- many children try to begin to spell by using an 'alphabetic' approach, trying to represent the sounds in words;
- children will develop as readers by drawing on phonological knowledge, which partly comes from alphabetic spelling, to decode unfamiliar words;
- children will develop as spellers by drawing on orthographic knowledge, which comes from their reading and their use of analogies of common letter strings (Gombert, Bryant and Warrick, 1997).

As Uta Frith (1985) points out, in reading and spelling the two act as 'pacemakers' for each other in the journey towards 'orthographic' (conventional) reading and writing. The precise way in which these pacemakers interact is a matter of debate. Some researchers suggest that children go through a 'logographic' stage in both reading and spelling, where they treat words as wholes, although others suggest that this may be more evident in reading. Many children seem intuitively to use their phonological knowledge much more in their early writing than they do in their early reading. However, children clearly need to draw on their learning from the one in order to develop their learning in the other. Nick Ellis provides a very helpful review of recent research in this area (Ellis, 1994).

The *NLS Framework* acknowledges these issues by bringing phonics and spelling together in the word level strand, and by providing different objectives under 'spelling strategies' which allow for the visual and aural aspects of learning to support each other. These strategies also reflect how success in spelling involves understanding other kinds of links between language and literacy. This understanding needs to include vocabulary connections between words which are pronounced differently (e.g. medicine/medical). It also needs to include grammatical influences on words which are pronounced differently (e.g. the use of -ed in kissed, purred and booted). John Mountford (1998) explores these different influences on the spelling system. The recurrent links between word, sentence and text level work in the *National Literacy Strategy* will help to ensure that teachers and pupils can consistently explore the English writing system in mutually beneficial ways.

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/publications/?pub_id=119&art_id=569&top_id=123

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Literature and poetry

Literature

The *NLS Framework* lays down considerable stress on 'range' in reading and writing. Each double-page of objectives is headed by references to the literary genres and forms which are given priority in that particular age-range. It also needs to be noted that various aspects of range will relate to other literacy activities outside the Literacy Hour e.g. in the teacher reading to the class; in pupils' own independent reading; and in extended writing (DfEE, 1998a, p. 14).

For many years, children's literature has been an area of extensive debate and discussion (Egoff, 1969; Meek *et al.*, 1977). Some of the most fundamental discussions arise in deciding what is appropriate for children of different ages and in addressing the issues which such decisions raise (Carpenter and Prichard, 1984; Fox, 1995). The question of what makes a 'good book' for children is discussed at length by Nicholas Tucker (1993). In an earlier publication Tucker suggests certain links between certain genres and certain aspects of children's psychological development (Tucker, 1981).

Such generalisations also have to be coupled with the recognition that children will revisit books as they grow older and discover features and themes which they had not been aware of before. Provision of literature for children also needs to be informed by what they choose to read in their leisure time. Martin Coles and Christine Hall (1999) have recently undertaken a national project to investigate children's voluntary reading choices in a sample of 8,000 10-14 year olds, replicating many of the elements of the 1970s study by the Schools Council (Whitehead *et al.*, 1977).

The Coles and Hall study indicates that over the last two decades book reading has increased in 10 year olds of both sexes and in 12 year old girls. It has declined in 14 year old boys. Clear gender and socio-economic influences were discovered. Girls read books more regularly, although avid readers are found in both sexes. The findings included the following:

- There is a decline in the amount of book reading from higher to lower socio-economic groups.
- Roald Dahl's books are overwhelmingly the most popular titles, although children's classics are still being widely read.
- Among series of books, Enid Blyton stories and the *Point Horror* series are the most popular.
- Very few children read only non-fiction, but 78% of those who do are boys.
- Adventure stories are the most popular genre at all ages and for both sexes.

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- Children who read the most watch least television.

Perhaps the most distinctive findings in this research are that children have very eclectic reading tastes and that children of any one age are reading books of markedly different levels of sophistication.

Such an acknowledgement of range and diversity underlies the literature elements in the *NLS Framework*. There is a recurrent reference to a variety of genres and traditions, many of which have been subjected to scholarly studies, e.g.:

traditional stories (Townsend, 1990)

fairy stories (Bettelheim, 1977)

fantasy worlds (Earnshaw, 1995)

stories by significant children's authors (Carpenter, 1985)

myths, legends, fables, parables (Cook, 1976)

adventure and mystery (Armstrong, 1995)

historical stories (Trease, 1995)

television adaptations (Buckingham, 1993).

Underlying this range is a recognition of the power of stories to engage children and to lift their minds away from the here and now to other worlds and possibilities, through what Coleridge called 'a willing suspension of disbelief'. The role of stories in literacy development was acknowledged in the discussion of home-school issues in the earlier section on the Reception age-range. Recognition of the role of stories infuses many of the text level objectives in the *Framework* and strengthens their potential for enriching sentence and word level work. This potential is likely to be all the greater because of the emphasis in text-level teaching on the use of large text formats. These formats enable pupils to see and hear simultaneously stories and extracts which have been chosen because of the special qualities which they enshrine. Recognition of the role of stories will also inspire sympathetic support for the aspects of literacy which need additional time (DfEE, 1998a, p. 14), especially pupils' own independent reading for interest and pleasure.

Christine Hall and Martin Coles (1997) have argued that their survey data are an important resource in considering boys' underachievement in school. Helping boys to develop as critical readers involves taking their voluntary reading seriously and rejecting 'deficit models' of reading habits. Critical and discerning readers are more likely to be developed if teachers and parents engage boys in discussions about their reading and the choices they make and help them to realise how their reading is influenced by wider social processes (see also Millard, 1997). Warwick Elley makes a similar recommendation in the light of the International Educational Achievement Study on Literacy. The good teacher gives pupils many opportunities to do independent, silent reading in a school which is richly stocked with books and she or he often holds discussions with the pupils about the books which they have read (Elley, 1994, p. 191).

Poetry

As was outlined in an earlier section, 'Policy and Strategic Justifications', the emphasis on teaching a range of literature and poetry is in the traditions of earlier central government publications. The *Framework* draws upon the argument in the Bullock Report that, where poetry is concerned, understanding and enjoyment are essential to one another (DES, 1975,*p. 136)*.The *Framework* lays consistent stress on the interplay between listening to, reading, writing and

performing poetry. The emphasis on performance links this aspect of the *National Literacy Strategy* to the likely origins of poetry in the songs, chants and other 'memorable speech' techniques of pre-literate societies (McArthur, 1995; Rosen, 1989).

Poetry is an especially crafted kind of written language. Its conspicuous structures and forms arouse interest and invite investigation (Kinneavy, 1971; Crystal, 1998). As the Kingman Report notes, children in particular are fascinated by word games (DES, 1988, p. 13). Their experience of rhymes and rhythms can be extended in several ways: to an enjoyment of poetry; to reflection upon the way language is fashioned for literacy effects; and to a variety of affective and cognitive responses (Benton and Fox, 1985; Corbett and Moses, 1991).

Teachers are, of course, central to these processes, fundamentally in their knowledge of the poetry which is available for pupils. Teachers can also explain what to expect from a particular book and its key poems (Morse, 1995) and help children to understand the techniques from which poetry is constructed. Children can be encouraged to draw upon their reading when experimenting with poetic techniques in writing (Brownjohn, 1994).

Poetry is often written to convey a kind of distilled essence of meaning. Ted Hughes (1967) calls this the 'spirit' of a poem, which moves its living parts, its words, images and rhythms. As the Bullock Report concludes, helping children to discover the spirit of a poem can provide one of the most rewarding experiences in all English teaching, as teacher and children meet in the mutual enjoyment of what is written (DES, 1975, p. 137). Increased use of shared and guided reading in primary classrooms is likely to extend such rewards substantially beyond the relatively narrow confines indicated by the inspection evidence which was discussed earlier in this *Review*.

The *NLS Framework* celebrates considerable range and diversity in the reading, writing and performance of poetry, going beyond the details provided in the current National Curriculum for English. The range is considerably wider than that reported in a national survey by Raban *et al.* (1993). Only the poetry of Allan Ahlberg was mentioned as receiving priority attention in ten or more schools and then in three successive age-ranges (Years 3-5). As such, the *Framework* links teachers and pupils to several dimensions of the international literary heritage and the scholars who have studied it, e.g.:

- informal word play in early childhood (Whitehead, 1995);
- the lore and language of chants and action rhymes (Opie, 1959; Boyes, 1995);
- nursery rhymes (Opie, 1951);
- poems by significant children's poets (Morse, 1995; Styles, 1998);
- riddles, tongue-twisters and shape poems (Crystal, 1987, 1995);
- acrostics and clerihews (McArthur, 1992; Brownjohn, 1994; Crystal, 1995);
- haiku, tanka, cinquains, kennings (Brownjohn, 1994);
- limericks and sonnets (McArthur, 1992).

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The *NLS Framework* has a strand running through its termly objectives which is concerned with reading and writing for information, under the sub-heading 'non-fiction'. This recurring emphasis takes up a similar theme in several chapters of the Bullock Report (DES, 1975). The original report for the National Curriculum in English produced by the Cox committee (DES, 1989) recommended a separate attainment target for 'information-retrieval for the purposes of study', although the final version of the National Curriculum merged the two attainment targets for reading. As a result, a number of information reading details were lost. The evaluation of the National Curriculum recommended that this aspect of reading be strengthened (Raban *et al.*, 1993) and the *NLS Framework* represents a further response to this call.

Central to this area of literacy is a recognition that the reading and writing of information are likely to involve different strategies from those used in dealing with narrative or other 'chronological' texts. Narratives are often read line by line, at a single speed and without a sense of specific purpose. Effective reading of information, on the other hand, may involve highly selective uses of different parts of a text in order to answer a specific question or to meet a particular information need. This reading may be undertaken at highly variable speeds (Harri-Augstein *et al.*, 1982; Carver, 1990).

Similarly, the writing of non-fiction texts is likely to involve less familiar 'discourse knowledge' than that used in the narrative and descriptive writing which are more widely undertaken in primary schools (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987). Information may need to be re-structured and *re-presented* by the use of specific organisational and grammatical techniques. This 'knowledge transformation' requires teaching which explicitly links reading, writing and oral discussion (Gubb *et al.*, 1987).

As was discussed in the 'General Model' section earlier, the *NLS Framework* draws upon recent curriculum development work in Australia which uses genre theory to support the teaching of non-fiction. The distinctive features of various genres are used firstly to raise awareness about their structures, then to model them in shared reading and writing and eventually to tackle them in collaborative or independent writing (Martin, 1989; Callaghan and Rothery, 1988; Cope and Kalantzis, 1993).

The EXEL project at Exeter University has also influenced the *NLS Framework*. The project has drawn together a range of skills and strategies to form the EXIT model ('Extending Interactions With Text'). The model maps ten process stages and related questions from activation of previous knowledge, through establishing purposes and locating information, to interacting with a text and communicating the information to others (Wray and Lewis, 1997).

To assist children in the writing of non-fiction, the project has used a number of 'frames', skeleton outlines of starters, connectives and sentence modifiers, to help to 'scaffold' early attempts to write in particular genres (Lewis and Wray, 1995). The EXEL project focused on recounts, reports, procedures, explanations, persuasion and

discussion, building on the work of Beverly Derewianka (1990).

Underlying these practices for promoting the reading and writing of information are broader principles concerned with reading comprehension in general. Jane Oakhill, who has extensively researched children's reading comprehension, reports that effective understanding of a text results in the construction of a 'mental model' of what the text describes. For this to happen, the meanings of individual sentences and paragraphs must be integrated with others. Inferential skills are essential to this process, as authors necessarily leave some links implicit to avoid excessive length and resulting tedium. Effective comprehension depends on an understanding of the main point and a sensitivity to the relative importance of other information in the text. To read effectively, readers need to monitor their own comprehension and know how to remedy any points of difficulty (Oakhill, 1993; Yuill and Oakhill, 1991).

Yuill and Oakhill also report that a significant proportion of children (perhaps 10-15%) have specific comprehension difficulties compared with their decoding abilities. They tend not to derive the gist as a whole or go beyond the literal meaning of a text. A recently completed study suggests that inadequate knowledge is unlikely to be the main source of inference problems in poor comprehenders. The main problem seems to be the integration of text and knowledge (Oakhill, Cain and Bryant, 1998). The study showed that poor comprehenders improved when they were asked to *re-consider* their responses and were directed to the relevant parts of the text.

Greater use of shared and guided reading and writing in the *National Literacy Strategy* may help to meet more of these children's needs if teachers model the underlying comprehension processes and if teachers consistently prompt poor comprehenders to read between the lines.

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Grammar and punctuation

Grammar

Grammar is the study of the way language is organised, especially the rules which are used between words (syntax) and within words (morphology). Adults and school-age children intuitively know a great deal of grammar and will quickly notice if word order is unusual or 'ungrammatical'. The uncertainty for teachers is how far to make this knowledge explicit and then which technical terms to use when referring to its different aspects. There is evidence that in recent years explicit use of grammatical terms has been less evident in schools because of a sense of dissatisfaction with the Latin model on which older approaches to grammar teaching were based (Keith, 1990). Moreover, research reviews (e.g. Wilkinson, 1971) have consistently failed to provide evidence that grammar teaching makes any difference to the quality of pupils' writing. Nevertheless, there has also been a growing feeling that grammar teaching has an unfulfilled potential, particularly if it reflects contemporary English, rather than a Latin-based model of language, and is authentically related to the purposes for which language and literacy are used.

The current 'vacuum' has meant that many higher education students may only have a tenuous grasp even of basic word classes (parts of speech) (Williamson and Hardman, 1995). Some basic grammatical content was recently introduced into initial teacher training requirements (TTA, 1998) and this may herald more informed coverage of grammar in schools in the new millennium. Further sign of a general change in thinking was the publication of *The Grammar Papers* (QCA, 1998). These papers represent a recent re-awakening of interest in the teaching of grammar, sparked in particular by a paper by David Tomlinson (1994). This paper drew attention to the weaknesses in some of the most influential publications which have been used as evidence that the teaching of grammar does not improve the quality of pupils' written work.

Contemporary approaches to grammar recognise the limitations of teaching which is concerned with a 'naming of parts'. For instance, the word 'table' can be labelled as a noun. Yet it can also act as an adjective 'table cloth' or as a verb 'to table a paper at a meeting'. Instead, contemporary approaches tend to be concerned with how the use of different words and phrases in the various parts of sentences (subjects, verbs, objects and so on) add interest and reflect particular genre features (Halliday, 1985; Perera, 1988). In this way, the different word classes (parts of speech) become part of broader concerns with 'grammatical awareness'. Such an approach builds on the view of the Kingman Report that pupils should reflect disinterestedly and illuminatingly on a range of questions, observations and problems which crop up in everyday language use (DES, 1988, p.19).

Variety can also be created in several different ways around basic sentence structures e.g.:

- by using different kinds of sentences (statements, questions, exclamations and imperatives) (Crystal, 1995);

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- by linking simple sentences together to make compound or complex sentences (Perera, 1984);

- by creating cohesion between sentences (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

By building in consistent details to grammar and punctuation, and in particular to grammatical awareness, the *NLS Framework* is helping teachers and pupils to take advantage of new thinking in this area of literacy education and to be part of what promises to be a more informed education system in relation to the structures and patterns of written language.

Punctuation

As was noted earlier, the *NLS Framework for Teaching* deals with punctuation within the strand which deals with grammar. The principal purpose of punctuation is to enable texts to be read coherently by displaying their grammatical structure. Key features include sentence-ending points, clause-dividing commas and paragraph-marking indentation (Crystal, 1995, p.278).

Punctuation has rarely been discussed at length in literacy education publications, as a member of the Kingman Committee has noted (DES, 1988; Waterhouse, 1991). Recent investigations by Nigel Hall and Anne Robinson (1996) have highlighted how little is known about how punctuation is taught and learned. Their work has revealed the ways in which punctuation represents a kind of 'socially constructed knowledge', because it is highly dependent upon a number of social conventions. While this knowledge is likely to be best learned in a context which stresses authentic reading and writing activities, it is also salutary to note that the use of punctuation marks in books for children is often inconsistent from one author to another. The use of exclamation marks, dashes and some commas can depend on the whims of the writer.

The devices used to show direct speech in early reading books can also be very variable. Katharine Perera's research has shown very different approaches in authors' practices regarding whether they use reporting clauses to attribute speech and, if they do use them, where these are placed in lines or sentences. The use of inverted commas (none, single or double) and capital letters also varies and children are likely to come across very different conventions as they move from book to book or between series of books. These variations are accompanied by marked differences in how several grammatical structures are presented, including the use of pronouns and reduced forms ('I'll' etc.) (Perera, 1993; 1996).

Such findings support the consistency of approach adopted in the *NLS Framework* and the emphasis on direct interactive teaching. Shared reading and writing in particular can provide a helpful environment in which punctuation can be explored and discussed. The accompanying opportunities for text level work can help provide authentic models of punctuation in use.

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		Teaching and Learning		Professional Knowledge
Source	**Sample size** (other details often found in original reports)	**Teaching Approach**	**Effective Learning Time**	**Teachers' Subject Knowledge**
HMI (1991a)	350 classes containing Y1 pupils; supporting evidence from 360 other KS1 classes.	... explicit reading instruction, whether to the whole class, groups or individuals, was rarely seen. (p. 16)	In some classrooms ... children were easily distracted because few structured demands were made of them. They copied to little effect... or filled in the gaps of commercial schemes or workbooks with little comment from the teacher. (p. 15)	
HMI (1992a)	1134 KS1 and KS2 primary school classes	The attempt to provide closer individual attention for some groups and individuals often led to unduly long intervals in the attention available for other pupils, to the detriment of performance (p.10).	... too often, less able pupils were given less of the range of experiences and opportunities provided for in the National Curriculum for English than other pupils.*(p. 9)*	Many LEAs had provided their teachers with courses... though they were not well attended by Key Stage 2 staff... the concern about the quality of provision in Key Stage 2 suggests that there were urgent unmet needs for INSET in English.*(p. 24)*
Ofsted (1993a)	1209 KS1 and KS2 classes	... much time and effort was often wasted [in research skills work]... where pupils were given too little guidance...*(p. 9)* Effective teaching of literacy in both Key Stages [was related to classrooms in which]... pupils received a good mix of direct teaching and opportunities to read and write with increasing independence. (p. 10)	Some guideline documents lacked the detail necessary for planning the full range of the Programme of Study and they rarely gave guidance on classroom organisation or teaching methods.*(p. 15)*	Many teachers remained far more uncertain about this aspect of their work [writing] in English than was the case, for example, in reading.*(p. 10)* ... the main INSET need was a better understanding of the nature and demands of the subject and, in particular, help with knowledge about language, its structure and function. (p. 20)
Ofsted (1993b)	629 lessons in 107 primary phase schools	Competence in spelling... could be improved if more teachers taught pupils more explicitly than they do. (p. 8)	... many schools did not incorporate the full range of the Programmes of Study. (p. 13)	... schools need to... help teachers to acquire more knowledge and expertise in relation to... the rigorous and contextualised teaching of phonics... knowledge about language... teaching writing. (p. 23)

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Ofsted (1995)	112 primary phase schools	... pupils suffer from an absence of direct teaching of reading skills [in Key Stage 2]. (p. 8)	Narrow or patchy coverage of programmes of study is a recurrent problem, leading to lack of balance in attention given to major aspects of English, such as the study of poetry.*(p. 14)*	There are persistent weaknesses in teachers' knowledge and expertise: knowledge about formal aspects of language, particularly grammar and syntax; the development of reading in Key Stage 2. (p. 3)
Ofsted (1996a)	2229 primary phase schools	About seven tenths of good lessons involve... a balance of whole class teaching and group work. Poor lessons... often lack this pragmatic balance. (p. 37)		
Ofsted (1996b)	as above			
Ofsted (1997a)	4077 primary phase schools	There is... too little direct teaching in many primary schools... classrooms where children make most progress are those where... the bulk of the lesson is taken up by the teacher explaining, questioning, pushing back the frontiers of the children's knowledge... teaching... to the whole class or to groups. (p. 6)	Too much teaching time... continues to be wasted on unduly complex organisational arrangements. (p. 6)	
Ofsted (1997b)	as above			Where the quality of teaching is poor, this is often because teachers... do not have sufficient knowledge about language and ways of teaching the structure, vocabulary and grammar of Standard English.*(p. 3)*
Ofsted (1998a)	5864 primary phase schools	... there are significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls... Boys' relatively poor performance is often linked to weaknesses in their basic skills... Primary schools need, in particular, to develop a structured approach to the teaching of basic skills. (p. 13)		... many teachers are insecure in their knowledge of the teaching of phonics.*(p. 23)*
Ofsted (1998b)	as above	The quality of teaching has improved slightly this year: it is best in nursery and reception classes, and in Year 6. (p. 3)	It is a credit to schools that pupils make such a good start in English. Increasingly, this reflects the attention that is now paid - rightly - to the teaching of literacy. (p. 1)	... many teachers still need to know more about language - its acquisition and development - in order to plan and work effectively. (p. 3)

	Curriculum Content and Focus			
Source	**Balance and Range**	**Phonics**	**Writing**	**Reading Extension**
HMI (1991a)	... more coherent and explicit approaches to reading need to be adopted, especially in the careful balancing	Sometimes... Year 1 children had not been adequately prepared for working out words which	The most effective writing... was often preceded and supported by discussion, so that children	Firmer foundations must be laid to ensure the widespread and effective development

	of methods for teaching reading. (p. 21)	were new to them. (p. 16)	began... with a clear idea of what they wished to communicate, the conventions they should follow, and how they might gain further support (p. 15)	of reading beyond the initial stages. (p. 16)
HMI (1992a)	The National Curriculum's provisions for the teaching of poetry, drama, imaginative writing and the development of habits of individual spelling, and its recommendations for the use of groups of various size and composition, also needed greater emphasis. (p. 15)		... high attainment in writing was infrequent and in Key Stage 2 it was clear that opportunities for writing were often too constrained.*(p. 14)*	... in Key Stage 2... Research and study skills frequently needed more systematic attention, as did the general reading development of less able pupils. (p. 13)
Ofsted (1993a)	[In relation to individual books]... schools generally provided too few opportunities for the pupils to see and hear the text of a story simultaneously by providing several copies of the same book for them to follow in groups as the teacher read the story. (p. 16) For most pupils in Key Stage 1, reading to the teacher was often the most frequent experience of one-to-one teaching... often less than five minutes per pupil. (p. 16)	How to structure the work and teach phonic skills thoroughly and effectively without, on the one hand, distorting the balance of the programme and, on the other hand, treating phonics superficially remains problematic in many schools. (p. 8)	... standards in all three Key Stages were weaker than in the other ATs [Attainment Targets], especially with regard to drafting and spelling. (p. 2)	... the teaching of more advanced reading skills [in Key Stage 2] was not sufficiently thorough in many of the schools. (p. 8)
Ofsted (1993b)	The quality of learning was highest where good teaching was allied to the pupils' access to a broad range of reading material including - but not limited to - reading schemes, and offering a good choice of poetry, novels and non-fiction. (p. 7)	In a significant number of schools the teaching of phonic skills was haphazard and superficial. (p. 7)	Standards of writing... were weaker in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1... Much remains to be done to improve the writing competence of pupils of all ages. (p. 2)	In about 40% of the lessons in Years 3-5, the generally good start made in Key Stage 1 was not maintained. (p.2)
Ofsted (1995)	... good teaching is based on clear planning, a sound knowledge of National Curriculum requirement, the		Good standards of writing are evident in only one in seven schools [at Key Stage 2]... There is too much use	In about 10% of schools... there is a clear expectation of progress; the pupils' experience of

	use of a range of effective teaching strategies ... and [a command] of how to combine them, as well as a wide knowledge of available children's literature. (p. 11)		of decontextualised and undemanding exercises. (p. 8)	reading is too narrow, lacking in poetry especially... (p. 8)
Ofsted (1996a)	Generally, schools give *pupils* enough opportunities to read stories but insufficient experience of poetry and non-fiction. (p. 19)	The place and purpose of teaching phonics... rarely feature strongly in school reading policies. Consequently, the teaching of phonic skills is not as thorough as it should be... as an established part of a well-structured reading programme for all pupils. (p. 9)	... the good start made prior to and in KS1 is often not sustained in KS2 where many pupils make slower progress than they should... particularly in writing. (p. 9)	Much improvement is needed in about one school in ten where development of pupils' reading in KS2 is left too much to chance.*(p. 19)*
Ofsted (1996b)	The relationship between the teaching of reading and writing needs greater emphasis. (p. 3)			
Ofsted (1997a)				
Ofsted (1997b)	There needs to be a better balance between whole class, large group and individual teaching. (p. 2)	Schools need to ground their work in a systematic approach to phonics but ensure that pupils' individual development is fully supported by a wide range of strategies *(p. 2)*	Standards in writing remain weaker than in the other Attainment Targets. (p. 1)	Beyond the early stages of reading... if pupils are to develop as enthusiastic, independent and reflective readers, they will need continuing guidance from knowledgeable teachers *(p. 3)*
Ofsted (1998a)			Too many pupils are unable to produce sustained, accurate writing in a variety of forms. This has been a pervasive weakness in many primary schools, which should be addressed more urgently. (p. 19)	The lack in many schools of a structured programme of reading for Key Stage 2 pupils is unacceptable. (p. 19)
Ofsted (1998b)	More teachers are confident in their understanding of the National Curriculum requirements and there is more direct whole-class teaching on the lines of the National Literacy Project's	... the phonic aspect of word level work is not always being systematically taught or given the emphasis which it requires. (p. 3)	Writing skills are weaker than those in reading and speaking and listening.*(p. 3)*	Too many pupils fail to go on developing their reading skills. (p. 3)

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